

DOCTRINAL DECLARATIONS

A Collection of Official Statements
on the Doctrinal Position of
Various Lutheran Bodies in America

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I. The Confessional Paragraphs of the Constitutions of the Larger Lutheran Organizations

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA

(Organized 1872)

§ 2. Doctrinal Basis

- a The Synodical Conference accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the Word of God and also the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, constituting the Book of Concord of 1580.
- . . .

(Following are the confessional paragraphs of the constitutions of the four member synods of the Synodical Conference and of the affiliated National Ev. Lutheran Church)

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

(Organized 1847)

Article II. Confession

Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;

2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

. . .

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN JOINT SYNOD OF WISCONSIN AND OTHER STATES

(Organized 1917 as successor to Joint Synod of Wisconsin [1850], Minnesota [ca. 1860], Michigan [1860], and Other States, organized 1892)

Article II. Confession

This Synod accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the divinely inspired and ~~inerrant~~ Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of doctrine, faith, and life.

This Synod also adheres to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church embodied in the Book of Concord of 1580, not insofar as, but because they are a correct presentation and exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God.

THE SLOVAK EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Organized 1902)

Article II. Confession

The Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church, and every member thereof, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the revealed and inspired Word of God, and the only rule and norm of faith and practice.

2. All the Symbolical Books as a true presentation and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: The three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed); the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530; the Apology of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; the Large Catechism of Luther; the Small Catechism of Luther; and the Formula of Concord.

. . .

THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD OF THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Organized 1918)

Paragraph 2. The only source and rule of the Synod's faith and doctrine is the sacred Word of God, revealed in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.

Paragraph 3. The Norwegian Synod subscribes to all the symbolical books, or confessions, of the Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord, as follows:

- a) The three ecumenical creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian;
 - b) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
 - c) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession;
 - d) The Smalcald Articles;
 - e) Luther's Small Catechism;
 - f) Luther's Large Catechism;
 - g) The Formula of Concord, Epitome;
 - h) The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration.
- . . .

THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Organized 1898)

III. Confession

1. This Church believes, teaches, and confesses that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and shall be the only source and rule of doctrine and life.

2. This Church accepts the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, as a correct presentation of the doctrines of the Word of God presented in these Books.

THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

(Organized 1918)

Article II. Doctrinal Basis

- b *Section 1.* The United Lutheran Church in America receives and holds the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and as the only infallible rule and standard of faith and practice, according to which all doctrines and teachers are to be judged.
 - c *Section 2.* The United Lutheran Church in America accepts the three Ecumenical Creeds, namely, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian, as important testimonies drawn from the Holy Scriptures, and rejects all errors which they condemn.
 - d *Section 3.* The United Lutheran Church in America receives and holds the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of faith and doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, founded upon the Word of God, and acknowledges all churches that sincerely hold and faithfully confess the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to be entitled to the name of Evangelical Lutheran.
 - e *Section 4.* The United Lutheran Church in America recognizes the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large and Small Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord as in the harmony of one and the same pure Scriptural faith.
- . . .

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Organized 1930)

Article II. Confession of Faith

- f *Section 1.* The Church accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life. (See Appendix.)
- g *Section 2.* The Church also accepts each and all of the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true exposition and presentation of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds, viz., the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian creeds; the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology; the Smalcald Articles; the Large and Small Catechisms of Luther; and the Formula of Concord.
- h *Section 3.* The Church regards unity in doctrine and practice as the necessary prerequisite for church fellowship and therefore adheres to the rule, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lu-

theran altars for Lutheran communicants only," and rejects unionism in all its forms.

- i *Section 4.* The Church is earnestly opposed to all organizations or societies, secret or open, which, without confessing faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of the eternal God, incarnate in order to be our only Savior from sin, are avowedly religious or practice forms of religion, teaching salvation by works. It declares such organizations and societies to be antichristian and rejects any fellowship with them.

Appendix

- j The following shall be the official interpretation of Article II, Section 1, of this constitution:
- k The Church believes that the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament in their original texts are, as a whole and in all their parts, the inspired and inerrant Word of God and accepts these books in the now generally recognized texts as substantially identical with the original texts and as the only inspired and inerrant authority, source, guide, and norm in all matters of faith and life.

. . .

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

(Organized 1930. Dissolved 1954)

Article 2

- l The American Lutheran Conference accepts the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament as the inspired Word of God and the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life and the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true presentation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith.

THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

(Organized 1918. Constitution adopted 1945. Confessional paragraphs in Preamble)

Preamble

- m WHEREAS, In their respective constitutions, the Participating Lutheran Church Bodies accept the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God and the only source, norm, and guide of Christian faith and life; and
- n WHEREAS, In their respective constitutions, the Participating Bodies accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism as the true exposition and presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; and
- o WHEREAS, The Participating Bodies are of the conviction that they can and should serve the Lutheran Church at large by co-operating

in matters of common interest and responsibility, co-operation in which does not affect their distinctive principles;

- p *Therefore*, said Church Bodies do hereby establish and will maintain a common agency to be governed by the following Constitution and Bylaws.

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

(Organized 1947)

- q The Lutheran World Federation acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and the infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice and sees in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God.

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

(From the constitution proposed for the new American Lutheran Church, in which the old American Lutheran Church is to be merged with other constituent bodies of the American Lutheran Conference of 1930 to 1954, namely, The Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lutheran Free Church, and United Evangelical Lutheran Church. 1956)

Article IV. Confession

- r *Section 1.* The American Lutheran Church accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

- s *Section 2.* As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, the Church accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members, both congregations and individuals:

(1) The ancient ecumenical Creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian;

(2) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.

- t *Section 3.* As further elaboration of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, the Church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord, and recognizes them as normative for its theology.

- u *Section 4.* The American Lutheran Church accepts without reservation the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church, not insofar as but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the evangelical Lutheran Church.

(The *Articles of Union*, a document preliminary to the constitution, in Article I, "Confession of Faith," adds to the above four sections the following Section 5)

v *Section 5.* We affirm the unity in matters of faith and life which was manifested in the Minneapolis Theses of 1930 (including the excerpts from the Chicago Theses of 1920) and in the *United Testimony on Faith and Life* of 1952, which are hereby made a part of these *Articles of Union* and are appended to them.

II. Additional Doctrinal Declarations

THE TOLEDO THESES

(Adopted by the Iowa Synod 1908. Adopted by the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States 1910. Pulpit and altar fellowship declared by the Joint Synod 1918)

Thesis I. The Church

- 1 The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is the communion of true believers as it is begotten through the means of grace and as by their use it edifies itself. From this it follows:
- 2 a) According to its real essence the Church is and remains invisible on this earth.
- 3 b) Common participation in the means of grace is the necessary form of the Church's appearance and the infallible mark of its existence; and in so far the Church is visible.

Thesis II. The Office of the Ministry

- 4 a) The rights and duties of the spiritual priesthood comprehend not only the general command and call that believers reduce to practice their fellowship in the Gospel and their right and title to the means of grace and accordingly teach and admonish one another in every manner, but also that without special call they preach the Word to heathens and unbelievers and in case of necessity administer the Sacrament of Baptism; and then also, that they establish the office of the ministry, inasmuch as this office has been originally and immediately given by Christ to the whole Church.
- 5 b) The office of the ministry rests upon a special command of the Lord, valid throughout all time, and consists in the right and power conferred by special call to administer the means of grace publicly and by commission of the congregation.
- 6 c) The call (to the pastorate) is a right of the congregation within whose bounds the minister is to discharge the office. Ordination is a public and solemn confirmation of the call and is but an apostolic churchly custom or order.

Thesis III. Attitude to the Confessions

- 7 a) A binding subscription to the Confessions (of the Church) pertains only to the doctrines of the faith therein set forth, and to these all without any exception.
- 8 b) Whereas the doctrine of Sunday as taught in the Confessions is a doctrine revealed in God's Word, it is not to be excluded from the body of obligatory dogmas.

Thesis IV. Open Questions

- 9 a) All doctrines revealed clearly and plainly in the Word of God are, by virtue of the divine authority of said Word, dogmatically fixed as true and binding upon the conscience, whether they have been symbolically settled as such or not.
- 10 b) There is within the Church of God no authority whatever for departing from any truths clearly revealed by the Scriptures, be their contents considered fundamental or nonfundamental, important or apparently unimportant.
- 11 c) Full agreement in all articles of faith constitutes the irremissible condition of church fellowship. Persistent error in an article of faith must under all circumstances lead to separation.
- 12 d) Perfect agreement in all nonfundamental doctrines, though not attainable on earth, is nevertheless an end desirable and one we should labor to attain.
- 13 e) Those who knowingly, obdurately, and persistently contradict the divine Word in any of its utterances whatsoever thereby overthrow the organic foundation (of the faith) and are therefore to be excluded from church fellowship.

Thesis V. Chiliasm

- 14 a) Any chiliasm which conceives the kingdom of Christ to be something external, earthly, and after the manner of the kingdoms of the world, and which teaches a resurrection of all believers before the day of Judgment shall come, is a doctrine directly contrary to the analogy of faith and is to be rejected as such.
- 15 b) The belief of some, to wit, that the reign of Christ and His saints referred to in Revelation 20 is an event belonging to the future, as also that the resurrection there spoken of is to be understood as a bodily resurrection of some believers unto life everlasting, is an opinion which, though not incompatible with the analogy of faith, cannot be strictly proved from Scripture, no more than the spiritual interpretation of said passages can be shown to be the true one.

Thesis VI. Predestination and Conversion

- 16 a) The error of Missouri on predestination we find to consist in this, that thereby the universal gracious will of God and His decree of election are so separated as to exclude one another and that thus two contradictory wills are affirmed of God. This error renders unsafe the foundation upon which our salvation is based and stamps as fundamentally wrong other statements which might otherwise admit of an acceptable interpretation.

- 17 b) Concerning conversion, drawn into controversy in connection with the doctrine of predestination, we confess that, viewed as the placing or planting of a new spiritual life, conversion does not depend to any extent whatsoever on any co-operation, self-determination, or good conduct on the part of man nor consist therein, but that it is wholly and solely the work of the Holy Ghost, working the same by His gracious power in the means of grace. On the other hand, however, we deny that the Holy Ghost works conversion according to a mere pleasure by His elective will or despite the most willful resistance, for example, in the case of the elect; but we hold that by such stubborn resistance both conversion and eternal election are hindered.

THE MADISON AGREEMENT

(Adopted by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America 1912)

Regarding the doctrine of election the union committees subscribe to the following:

Agreement (Opgjøer)

- 18 1. The union committees of the Synod and the United Church acknowledge unanimously and without reservation that doctrine of election which is presented in Article XI of the Formula of Concord and in Pontoppidan's *Sandhed til gudfrygtighed*, Question 548.
- 19 2. Since both the negotiating church bodies recognize that the Formula of Concord presents the pure and correct doctrine of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confession concerning the election of the children of God to salvation, it is deemed unnecessary to church unity to draw up new and more extensive theses regarding this article of faith.
- 20 3. Since, however, it is generally known that concerning the doctrine of election two forms of presentation have been used, both of which have gained prescriptive right and recognition within the orthodox Lutheran Church;
- 21 While some, in agreement with the Formula of Concord, make the doctrine of election comprehend the entire salvation of the elect, from the calling to the glorification (Formula of Concord, Art. XI, 10–20), and teach an election “to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”;
- 22 Others, like Pontoppidan, in conformity with John Gerhard, Scriver, and other acknowledged teachers in the Church, define election rather as the decree of final glorification, with faith and perseverance wrought by the Spirit as its necessary presupposition, and teach that “God has predestinated all those to eternal life who from eternity He has seen would accept the proffered grace, believe on Jesus Christ, and remain steadfast in this faith unto the end”; and since neither of these two forms of doctrine presented in this manner contradicts any doctrine revealed in the Word of God, but [each] does full justice to the order of salvation as elsewhere presented in the Word of God and the Confession of the Church – we hold that this fact ought not to cause any division in the Church nor disturb that unity of Spirit in the bond of peace which God desires should prevail among us.
- 23 4. Since, however, during the doctrinal controversy among us, words and expressions have been used – rightly or wrongly attributed to the one party or the other – which seemed to the other side a denial of the Confession of the Church or lead to such denial, therefore we have agreed to reject all erroneous doctrines which seek to explain away the mystery of election (Formula of Concord, Art. XI,

51–64) either in a synergistic or Calvinizing manner; in other words, we reject every doctrine which either, on the one hand, would deprive God of His honor as the only Savior or, on the other hand, weakens man's feeling of responsibility when face to face with the acceptance or rejection of grace.

5. *On the one hand we reject*

- 24 a) The doctrine that the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ is not the only cause of our election, but that there also in us is a cause on account of which God has elected us to eternal life;
- 25 b) The doctrine that in the election God has been determined by, or has taken into account, or has been directed by, the good conduct of man or by anything which man is or may do or omit to do, "as of himself or from his own natural powers";
- 26 c) The doctrine that the faith in Christ, which is indissolubly connected with election, is wholly or in part a product of, or dependent upon, man's own choosing, power, or ability (compare, however, Formula of Concord, Art. XI, 70–72, 82–85);
- 27 d) Or that this faith is the result of a power and ability imparted to man by the call of grace, a power now dwelling in, and belonging to, the unregenerate heart, to come to a determination to accept grace.

6. *On the other hand, we reject*

- 28 a) The doctrine that in the election God acts arbitrarily and without motive and points out and counts indiscriminately a certain arbitrary number of individuals, and ordains them to conversion and salvation, while the others are passed by.
- 29 b) The doctrine that the will of God regarding our salvation is of two different kinds, one revealed in the Scriptures in the general order of salvation, and another, different from this one and unknown to us, which concerns only the elect, and imparts to these a deeper love, a more effective calling from God, and a larger measure of grace than are brought to those who remain in unbelief and condemnation.
- 30 c) The doctrine that, when the resistance which God in conversion removes from those who are saved is not removed from the others, who finally are lost, this difference in result has its cause in God and in a different will regarding salvation in His act of election.
- 31 d) The doctrine that a believer can and ought to have an absolute certainty of his election and salvation, instead of an assurance of faith, built upon the promises of God, and joined with fear and trembling and with the possibility of falling from grace, which, however, by the grace of God he believes will not become a reality in his case.

- 32 e) To summarize, all views and doctrines concerning election which directly or indirectly would conflict with the order of salvation and would not give to all a full and equally great opportunity of salvation or which in any manner would violate the word of God which says that "God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth,"—from which gracious and merciful will of God all election to eternal life has its origin.

On the basis of the above agreement the union committees submit to their respective church-bodies to adopt the following

Resolution

- 33 WHEREAS, Our Confession establishes that "for the true unity of the Church it is sufficient that there be agreement in the doctrine of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments"; and

- 34 WHEREAS, Our former committees, by the grace of God, have attained unity in the doctrines concerning the calling, conversion, and the order of salvation in general and we all confess as our sincere faith that we are saved by grace alone, without any co-operation on our part; and

- 35 WHEREAS, The negotiations of our new committees have led to a satisfactory agreement concerning the doctrine of election and to an unreserved and unanimous acknowledgment of the doctrine of election which is presented in the *Formula of Concord*, Art. XI, and in Pontoppidan's *Sandhed til gudfrygtighed*, Question 548;

- 36 Therefore we hereby declare that the essential unity now attained concerning these doctrines is sufficient for church union.

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant us the grace of His Holy Spirit that we all may be one in Him and ever remain steadfast in such Christian and God-pleasing union! Amen.

- 37 **Note on the Austin Agreement:** Concerning the Austin Agreement (Settlement), 1916—17, it might be mentioned here as a matter of general information that the Austin Agreement makes three changes in the Madison Agreement. It omits Paragraph 1 of the Madison Agreement; it substitutes in Paragraph 3 "*Formula Concordiae*, Art. XI, 1—20," for "Art. XI, 10—20"; and in Paragraph 4 it substitutes the statement "or, on the other hand, weakens man's feeling of duty over against the acceptance of grace or of guilt for the rejection of grace" for the statement: "or, on the other hand, weakens man's feeling of responsibility over against the acceptance or rejection of grace."

THE WASHINGTON DECLARATION

Declaration of Principles Concerning the Church and Its External Relationships

(Adopted by the United Lutheran Church in America 1920)

38 WHEREAS, During the past two years the Executive Board has been asked repeatedly to define the attitude of the United Lutheran Church toward co-operative movements both within and without the Lutheran Church, toward movements of various kinds looking in the direction of church union, and toward organizations, tendencies, and movements, some of them within and some of them without the organized Church; and

39 WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United Church (Art. VIII, Sec. 1) and its By-laws (Sec. 5, Div. C, Items 1 and 2) require that the forming and dissolving of "relations with other bodies, organizations, and movements" lies within the power of the United Lutheran Church alone and that "all questions affecting the principles, practice, and policy of the Church as a whole" shall be referred to the United Church for decision;

Therefore the Executive Board submits to the United Church the following DECLARATIONS OF PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND ITS EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS, and recommends it for adoption.

40 In order that all misunderstandings and misconstructions of this declaration or any of its parts may be avoided, the United Lutheran Church declares in advance that it does not regard the statements therein contained as altering or amending the Confessions of the Church in any particular or as changing the doctrinal basis of the United Lutheran Church set forth in *Article II of the Constitution*. On the contrary, it considers this declaration nothing more than the application to present conditions of doctrines already contained in the Confessions.

A. *Concerning the Catholic Spirit in the Church*

41 I. In its Confessions the Evangelical Lutheran Church declares its belief that there is "one holy Church," which "will continue forever." It defines this Church as the "congregation of saints and true believers." (Augsb. Conf., VII and VIII.)

42 II. This one holy Church performs its earthly functions and makes its presence known among men through groups of men who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ. In these groups the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered. To such groups also the name "Church" is given in the New Testament and in the Confessions of our Church.

43 III. The existence of the one holy Church is not capable of demonstration. It is a "mystery" that can be apprehended only by faith. To the eyes of men it appears that there is not one Church, but only many churches; nevertheless we believe that there is but one Church of Jesus Christ. This conviction rests upon our belief in the continued life of Christ in all His Christians, binding them together into one spiritual body, of which He is the Head, and building them up into one spiritual temple, of which He is the Cornerstone; and upon our belief in the efficacy of the Word of God and the Sacraments as means of grace (A. C., V). We believe that wherever the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered, the Holy Spirit works faith in Christ. In every such place therefore there are believers in Jesus Christ, and wherever there are believers, there the one holy Church is present. For this reason we call the Word and the Sacraments "marks," or "signs," of the one holy Church. Therefore the Augsburg Confession adds to its definition of the Church the words, "in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."

44 IV. In the Nicene Creed we confess our belief that this Church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."

45 1. We believe that this Church is one because we believe that there cannot be more than one "congregation of saints and true believers," or more than one spiritual body, of which Christ is the Head, or more than one spiritual temple, of which He is the Cornerstone.

46 2. We believe that this Church is holy, because we believe that to all believers the righteousness of Christ is given with the forgiveness of their sins, for which reason true believers are called "saints" in the New Testament and in the Confessions of our Church. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, through the Word and the Sacraments preached and administered in the churches, does progressively create holiness of life and will and purpose in all those who believe and progressively unite their lives with the continued life of Christ.

47 3. We believe that this one holy Church is catholic, because we believe that, since there is but one "congregation of saints and true believers," it must include all the saints and true believers of every time and place (Apol., chap. IV). By the term "catholic" therefore we describe that quality of universality which belongs to the Church as a spiritual reality, or object of faith (cf. III, above), and raises it above all local and temporal forms of expression in organization, rite, and ceremony.

48 4. We believe that this one, holy, catholic Church is also apostolic, not because of the union of its members in any one organization

which claims to possess external, historical connection with the apostles, but because we believe that the faith in Jesus Christ, which all the members of the one, holy, catholic Church have in common, is the same faith that was in the hearts and lives of the apostles of Jesus Christ; and because we believe that this faith has been, and still is, perpetuated by the unbroken testimony of believers, through all the centuries of Christian history, from the days of the apostles to the present day; and because we believe that in the Holy Scriptures we have a permanent and authoritative record of that apostolic truth which is the ground of Christian faith.

49 V. Every group of professing Christians calling itself a Church will seek to express in its own life the attributes of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. This it does

50 1. By professing faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ, as the Savior of the world and the Revealer of the will and love of God the Father, is necessary to the existence of the Church. Therefore no group of men, however organized, which does not exist as a congregation of professed believers in Jesus Christ may claim the name of Church; for it is Christ Himself, living by the Holy Spirit in believing Christians, who makes the Church one and holy.

51 2. By preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. Every group calling itself a Church must preach the Word and administer the Sacraments; for these are the means through which the Holy Spirit works faith and thus creates and perpetuates the one holy Church. Therefore the Word and the Sacraments are properly called "marks" of the Church (cf. III, above); for where they are present, the Church is; where they are absent, the Church is not and cannot be.

52 In the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments every group of Christians seeks to express the apostolic character of the one holy Church. Every such group bases its preaching and teaching upon the Scriptures and endeavors to proclaim what it has learned from them. Believing that it has correctly ascertained this truth, it becomes its duty to teach, preach, and confess it fully, freely, and courageously. Christians must not only profess their faith in Christ, but must also confess and publicly declare what they believe about Christ and His Gospel; this duty of every Christian is the imperative duty of every group of Christians calling itself a Church.

53 3. By works of serving love. The ideals of love and service which Christ has taught as the true ideals of the individual Christian life must also be the ideals of any group calling itself a Church. The love of Christians for God and His Christ, for one another and

their fellow men, is a motive strong enough to drive them to works of service, and this love, itself a creation of God the Holy Spirit within the hearts of men, sets tasks for every group that calls itself a Church. They are tasks of service, not of government; of love, not of law (cf. D, IV, 3, below). These works of love and service are a witness to the faith that lives in the whole group and an evidence of the presence of the living Christ and are in themselves a proclamation of the Gospel. In outward form they may appear to be merely humanitarian and altruistic; in motive they are Christian, born of the love of Christ and performed in His name and in obedience to His command.

54 4. By the attempt to secure universal acceptance of the truth which it holds and confesses. Such an attempt need not be accompanied by the effort to enlarge its own external organization by drawing into its membership Christians of other organizations; for the aim of a Church should be not to make proselytes but to spread the truth of the Gospel. To this end it will constantly bear witness to the truth which it believes, and by this testimony, and by the cultivation of sympathy with all those who hold the same truth, every group will seek to attain universality, and thus express completely the holy Church's attribute of catholicity.

55 5. To accomplish these purposes (Nos. 1-4, above), every such group will maintain the office of the ministry, commanded and instituted by Christ. For the sake of good order and efficiency further organization is also necessary; but the forms which the organization takes will vary with circumstances of time and place and are in themselves matters of expediency.

56 VI. Every group of professing Christians in which the Word of God is so preached and the Sacraments are so administered that men are saved therein is truly, partial and imperfect as it may be, an expression of the one holy Church (cf. II, above), inasmuch as it displays the marks of the Church (cf. III and V, 2, above).

57 We believe, however, that distinctions must be recognized between one group and another. In making these distinctions, we believe that those groups in which the Word of God is most purely preached and confessed according to the Holy Scriptures and in which the Sacraments are administered in the closest conformity to the institution of Christ will be the most complete expression of the one holy Church. For this reason it is necessary that, when occasion arises, any such group of Christians shall define its relationship to other groups which also claim the name of Church as well as to other groups and organizations which do not bear that name.

58 VII. This definition of relationships should be framed in the spirit of catholicity. Moved by that spirit, a Church will always be ready

59 1. To declare unequivocally what it believes concerning Christ and His Gospel and to endeavor to show that it has placed the true interpretation upon that Gospel (cf. V, 2 and 4, above) and to testify definitely and frankly against error.

60 2. To approach others without hostility, jealousy, suspicion, or pride, in the sincere and humble desire to give and receive Christian service.

61 3. To grant cordial recognition to all agreements which are discovered between its own interpretation of the Gospel and that which others hold.

62 4. To co-operate with other Christians in works of serving love (cf. V, 3, above) in so far as this can be done without surrender of its interpretation of the Gospel, without denial of conviction, and without suppression of its testimony as to what it holds to be the truth.

B. Concerning the Relation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Bodies to One Another

63 In the case of those church bodies calling themselves Evangelical Lutheran and subscribing the Confessions which have always been regarded as the standards of Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, the United Lutheran Church recognizes no doctrinal reasons against complete co-operation and organic union with such bodies.

C. Concerning the Organic Union of Protestant Churches

64 In view of the wide-spread discussion concerning the organic union of the Protestant churches in America we declare

65 I. That we hold the union of Christians in a single organization to be of less importance than the agreement of Christians in the proclamation of the Gospel. We believe that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church exists through and under divergent forms of external organization. Union of organization we hold therefore to be a matter of expediency, agreement in testimony to be a matter of principle.

66 II. That holding the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments to be the primary function of every Church, we believe that a clear definition of what is meant by "Gospel" and "Sacrament" must precede any organic union of the churches. We believe that a permanent and valid union of churches must be based upon positive agreements concerning the truth for which the united church body is to stand. The churches cannot unite as mere protestants, but only as confessors. (Cf. A, V, 2; VII, 4.)

67 III. That as a necessary step toward a genuine organic union we believe that the Protestant church bodies in America should endeavor to set forth, definitely and positively, the views of Christian truth for which each of them does now actually stand in order that by their clear and unequivocal testimony to what they hold to be the truth the nature and extent of their agreements and disagreements may become apparent.

68 IV. That we recognize the obligation which rests upon us to make a clear and full declaration concerning the truth which we hold and are therefore ready, as opportunity offers, to give answer concerning our reasons for accepting and maintaining the doctrines and principles set forth in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

69 V. That until a more complete unity of confession is attained than now exists, the United Lutheran Church is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts, and its altars must testify only to that truth.

D. Concerning Co-operative Movements among the Protestant Churches

70 In view of the many proposals for co-operation of the Protestant churches in various departments of practical activity and in view of the many organizations already formed, and in process of formation, for the carrying on of such co-operative work, we declare

71 I. That it is our earnest desire to co-operate with other church bodies in all such works as can be regarded as works of serving love, through which the faith of Christians finds expression; provided that such co-operation does not involve the surrender of our interpretation of the Gospel, the denial of conviction, or the suppression of our testimony to what we hold to be the truth (Cf. A, V, 4; VII, 3, above.) In this connection, however, we call attention to the Constitution of the United Lutheran Church, Article VIII, Section 1: "No synod, conference, or board, or any official representative thereof, shall have the power of independent affiliation with general organizations and movements," and also to the By-laws, Article V, Division C, Item 2: "No official relationship with any other ecclesiastical bodies or their agencies shall be entered into by any board or committee of the United Lutheran Church in America without the approval of the Church."

72 II. That we cannot give general approval to all co-operative movements and organizations of the churches since we hold that co-operation is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end. Our

attitude toward any such organization or movement must be determined by a consideration of

a) The purpose which it seeks to accomplish.

b) The principles on which it rests.

c) The effect which our participation will produce upon the independent position of our Church as a witness to the truth of the Gospel which we confess. (Cf. C, VII, above.)

73 III. That, holding the following doctrines and principles, derived from the Holy Scriptures, to be fundamental to the Christian message, we propose them as a positive basis of practical co-operation among the Protestant churches. To avoid all possible misunderstandings or misconstructions of these statements, we declare that we do not regard them as a summary of Lutheran doctrine or as an addition to, a substitute for, or a modification of, the Confessions of our Church; nor do we propose them as an adequate basis for an organic union of the churches, but merely as a criterion by which it may be possible for us to determine our attitude toward proposed movements of co-operation.

74 1. The Fatherhood of God, revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, and the sonship bestowed by God, through Christ, upon all who believe in Him.

75 2. The true Godhead of Jesus Christ and His redemption of the world by His life and death and resurrection; and His living presence in His Church.

76 3. The continued activity of God the Holy Spirit among men, calling them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ and enlightening and sanctifying them through the gifts of His grace.

77 4. The supreme importance of the Word of God and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the means through which the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ and thus creates and strengthens faith. (In common with the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church we confess the mystery of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and we invite all Christians to a renewed study of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures concerning this Sacrament and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.)

78 5. The authority of the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule and standard by which all doctrines and teachers are to be judged.

79 6. The reality and universality of sin and the inability of men, because of sin, to attain righteousness or earn salvation through their own character or works.

- 80 7. The love and the righteousness of God, who for Christ's sake
bestows forgiveness and righteousness upon all who believe in Christ.
- 81 8. The present existence upon earth of the kingdom of God,
founded by His Son, Jesus Christ, not as an external organization, but
as a spiritual reality and an object of faith.
- 82 9. The hope of Christ's second coming to be the Judge of the
living and the dead and to complete the kingdom of God.
- 83 IV. That, in view of the above statements, our attitude toward
proposed co-operative movements and organizations, already defined
in principle in Section A, VII, and D, I, above, must be subject to
the following limitations:
- 84 1. We cannot enter into any co-operative movement or organiza-
tion which denies any of the doctrines or principles set forth in III,
above.
- 85 2. We cannot enter into any organization or movement which
limits the co-operating Churches in their confession of the truth or
their testimony against error. In all co-operative movements we claim
the right, and regard it as a duty, to testify freely to the truth as it
is set forth in the Confessions of our Church, and we believe that
the same right must be guaranteed to every participating Church.
All such testimony should receive a courteous and respectful hearing.
- 86 3. We cannot enter into co-operative movements or organizations
whose purposes lie outside the proper sphere of church activity. In
determining what that sphere is, we must be guided by the fun-
damental principle that the functions of the Church are the preach-
ing of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments and the
performance of works of love. (Cf. A, V, above.) We hold that the
use of the church organization as an agency for securing the enact-
ment and enforcement of law or for the application of other methods
of external force is foreign to the true purpose for which the Church
exists.
- 87 V. That there are organizations and movements into which we
cannot enter as a Church, in regard to which, however, the Church
may definitely declare itself, and which it may heartily commend to
the pastors and members of its congregations as important spheres
of activity for Christians, such as movements and organizations for
social and political reform, the enforcement of law and order, the
settlement of industrial conflicts, the improvement of the material
environments of life, and the like.

*E. Concerning Movements and Organizations Injurious to the Chris-
tian Faith*

- 88 In view of the prevalence throughout our land of doctrines which
are subversive of the Christian faith and in view of the indifference

manifested by many Christian people to the doctrines and principles of the teachers, sects, and organizations which seek their adherence and support and in view of the fact that through the acceptance of religious and other teachings which contradict the Gospel of Christ the faith of Christians is endangered, we declare

89 I. That we solemnly warn all our pastors and the members of our congregations against all teachers, sects, and organizations of any kind whose doctrines and principles contradict the truths set forth in Section D, III, of this Declaration or which limit their adherents or members in a free confession of their Christian faith. (Cf. A,V, 3, above.)

90 II. That we warn them especially against all teachers, sects, and societies whose doctrines and principles deny the reality of sin, the personality of God, the full and complete Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His redemption of the world by His sufferings and death, and the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures, as well as against all teachers, sects, and societies which teach that men can be saved from sin, or can become righteous before God, by their own works or by any other means than the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. We believe that such doctrines are not only not Christian, but are antichristian and destructive of true Christian faith and life.

91 III. That, inasmuch as these and other false and dangerous doctrines are widely spread, not only by the activity of individual teachers, but also by the dissemination of literature and through the agency of societies and other organizations calling themselves by various names which oftentimes conceal the real nature of the doctrines and principles for which they stand, we therefore lay it upon the consciences of the pastors and of the members of all our congregations to scrutinize with the utmost care the doctrines and principles of all teachers, sects, organizations, and societies of every sort which seek their adherence and support, and to refuse such adherence and support in all cases of conflict or possible contradiction between these principles and doctrines and those set forth in Holy Scripture and in the Confessions of the Church. In the application of this principle the Church should always appeal to a conscience which it is her sacred duty to enlighten, patiently and persistently, from the Word of God. (Cf. also Constitution of the United Lutheran Church, Art. VIII, Sec. 6.)

THE INTERSYNODICAL (CHICAGO) THESES

(Drawn up 1928 by official representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Missouri Synods. Accepted by the Buffalo Synod 1929. The sections on Conversion and Election had been adopted by the Iowa Synod before completion of the entire document)

Brief Presentation of the Doctrine of Conversion and Election

- 92 Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion and election of grace as presented on the basis of Scripture in the confessional writings of our Church.

This doctrine, briefly stated, is as follows:

- 93 1) Holy Scripture teaches that through original sin man is by nature in such a state of corruption that, on the one hand, he lacks all power and ability unto anything that is good in a spiritual respect, and, on the other hand, he is filled with a desire for, and inclination to, everything that is evil.
- 94 2) Prompted by His mercy and unmerited grace God in His love has taken up the cause of the lost and condemned human race and has prepared salvation in Christ for all without exception. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all men should be converted to Him.
- 95 3) To this end He causes His eternal, divine Law and the saving Gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, to be preached in all the world.
- 96 4) The preaching of God's Word is the means and instrument by which God proposes to work effectually in all and to save all. If God is to do His work in man, man must hear the Word. (Baptism and the Lord's Supper are included in the Word; they are "the Word made visible.")
- 97 5) By the Word, God works in them that hear the Word. By the preaching of the Law He crushes our hearts and thus leads us to know our sin and the anger of God and to experience in heart a genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow. By the preaching of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of our sins in Christ He draws us in such a manner that a spark of faith is kindled in us. (F. C., 601, 54; *Triglotta*, 903.)
- 98 6) This work of conversion, according to the teaching of Scripture, is entirely and exclusively God's work. Man can in no wise make himself worthy of it, prepare himself for it, nor, in general, conduct himself in such a manner that it would be because of man's conduct that God performs His work in him. True, natural man can make an external use of the Word of God by hearing and reading it. (F. C., 594, 24; 601, 53; *Triglotta*, 891 and 901.) However, he can

in no wise contribute anything toward his conversion, but, as much as in him lies, can only frustrate this work of God in him.

99 7) True, even in the converted person there remains a certain resistance because original sin is not eradicated until death; but in the heart of the believer the Holy Ghost, by His power, has brought forth a new life, which daily overcomes this resistance.

100 8) The sinner's failure to be converted and saved is in no wise due to God, but is entirely the fault of man, who either does not hear God's Word or, having heard it, puts it out of his mind, despises it, closes his ear, and hardens his heart against it, and in this manner blocks the way to the Holy Spirit. A person who in this manner resists the Holy Spirit continually and persistently and who forever rejects the grace of God willfully is not converted and perishes by his own fault.

101 9) Accordingly, every true Christian confesses: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." He will also on "the Last Day raise up me and all the dead and give to me and all that believe in Christ eternal life."

102 10) Even in eternity every detail that pertains to all that the Holy Spirit has done, is doing, and will yet do, in me and all believers has been considered and ordained by God out of grace alone, for Christ's sake, so that our salvation rests entirely in His faithful hands, and whatever may befall us must work together for our good.

103 11) This eternal counsel of God regarding His children, revealed to us in His Word particularly for strengthening our faith in times of trouble and tribulation, we call, in accordance with the Scriptures and our Confessions, "God's ordination unto sonship and eternal life," or, briefly, "the election of grace."

104 12) We find our election revealed only in Christ, who is the Book of Life, and only in Him can we be assured of our election. The elect are not saved by any other grace than that which is trampled under foot by them that are lost. This constrains us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. 2:12, 13, which means, that we be careful to abide with Christ and His Word, that we pray diligently, that we faithfully put to use the gifts we have received, and thus "make our calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10.

105 13) When our faith views this eternal gracious counsel of God regarding us Christians, from which springs our entire salvation now and hereafter, we join with all our heart in the doxology of Paul in Eph. 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

- 106 In view of the controversies waged during the last decades we deem it necessary to offer this brief presentation of the Lutheran doctrine in an extended form and in antithetical statements reject false presentations and errors.

A. Conversion

I. Brief Presentation

- 107 Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding conversion as it is presented on the basis of Scripture in divers places in the confessional writings of our Church, particularly in Article XII of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, in the Smalcald Articles, and in Article II of the Formula of Concord.
- 108 1) Since the Fall, man is by nature *flesh* (John 3:6) and hence an enemy of God (Rom. 8:7). His intellect is darkened (1 Cor. 2:14); his will is turned away from God and directed only towards what is evil (John 8:34; 2 Tim. 2:26). He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Being in this condition, man is of himself incapable of anything good and unfit for it. He wills, and can will and do, only that which is evil and contrary to God. This is the natural condition of all men without exception. (Rom. 3:12; F. C., 589, 7; *Triglotta*, 883, 7.)
- 109 2) Out of pure mercy God the Holy Spirit approaches these men who are spiritually dead and enemies of God by the preaching of His Word. By the preaching of the Law He desires to bring them to a knowledge of their sins and of the anger of God; by the preaching of the Gospel He desires to produce in them the knowledge of salvation, of the free grace of God in Christ. In this manner He desires to convert them to Himself. (A. C., 12; F. C., 601, 54; cp. p. 98, 61; 171, 28; 173, 44 ff.) It is God's gracious will, *equally earnest towards all men*, that all be saved and that all come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4; Ezek. 33:11; John 3:16.)
- 110 3) Natural man in no wise meets this gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in his heart (Rom. 9:16; F. C., 589, 7) but *resists* it. He cannot but resist it, because he is unfit for anything good, an enemy of God, and a servant of sin. (Rom. 8:7; F. C., 592, 17. 18; 509, 44.) He resists the grace of God with all his powers, *knowingly, intentionally, and in a hostile spirit*. (F. C., 593, 18. 22.) *Of his own accord he strives only* to frustrate the gracious work of God in him. This is the natural attitude of all men towards the gracious work of God by His Word as far as their own will and ability are concerned.
- 111 4) This resistance against the Word and grace of God is expressed and manifested in individuals differently, according to their characteristic traits or according to external circumstances, but it is essentially

the *same* in all men. In its real essence it is nothing else than the *refusal of grace, rebellion against God and His grace.* (F. C., 609, 83.) This resistance springs from the innate evil nature of man, from original sin, and consists in the hostile opposition which man knowingly and purposely sets against grace. (F. C., 593, 21.) Over against the grace of God in His Word all men are by nature equally guilty (*in eadem culpa*, Rom. 3:23, 24); this means that by nature their attitude towards the work and grace of God is evil only. This applies to those who are converted by the grace of God and to those who are lost by their own fault. (F. C., 716, 57, 58.)

112 5) Natural man cannot by his own powers omit, break, and hinder, nor even diminish this resistance. Man is and remains an enemy of God and resists the Word and will of God until faith in Christ is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. (F. C., 589, 5; 590, 11, 12; 593, 21; 602, 59.) Nor can man omit this resistance by spiritual powers which God, as some hold, confers on him before the creation of faith and which man is supposed to employ for his own conversion. This would presuppose that man, after all, has by nature or prior to faith a *will* to convert himself and also the ability to accept, and to properly employ, the spiritual powers offered him.

113 6) True, even before faith is kindled, a person receives in his heart various impressions of the operation of the Law and the Gospel, all kinds of emotions which he cannot evade (*motus inevitabiles*, Mark 6:20; Luke 4:22; Acts 24:25; John 16:8-11). However, these emotions a person *suffers* by the operation of God upon him from without, independently of his own volition, yea, in opposition to the same. Before faith is kindled, no inward change for the *good* takes place in the person by which he would be enabled, even before conversion, through the operation of grace, to submit to the grace of God, to assume a passive attitude to grace, to allow the grace of God to continue its operation upon him, etc. (1 Cor. 2:14.) On the contrary, all that man is able to do and does of his own accord merely tends to ward off these impressions and to suppress these emotions. Until renewed by God, his will remains the same obstinate will that is at enmity with God. *There is no intermediate state between being converted and being unconverted*, between spiritual death and spiritual life. (F. C., 602, 59; 593, 20, 21.)

114 7) God alone, by the operation of His mighty grace, can overcome this resistance in man against His grace and His Word. (Eph. 1:19; 2:5-10; Rom. 9:16.) He does it by bringing a person who has learned to know his perdition by means of the Law and is terrified by God's anger to faith in his Savior by means of the Gospel, thus drawing the person to Him, raising him from spiritual death, regenerating and renewing him. (Eph. 2:8, 9; F. C., 609, 87; 603, 61.)

However, conversion does not take place by irresistible grace or by coercion, which would be the same thing; for conversion consists in this very thing, that God, by means of the Gospel, turns a rebellious will into an obedient will, an unwilling person into a willing one. (F. C., 603, 60; 609, 87. 88.)

115 8) When faith is kindled, man's attitude towards the Word and grace of God is entirely changed. In the power of God who works in him both to will and to do the person *willingly assents to what God proposes*. There arise in him good emotions and sensations of a truly spiritual nature. These are the new spiritual life in him. Immediately man begins to fear, love, and trust in God. He is engaged in the daily practice of repentance and co-operates in good works, which the Holy Ghost accomplishes in him. (F. C., 603, 63; 604, 65. 66; 605, 70; 609, 88.) Indeed, even in the regenerate there still remains a certain resistance toward the Word and grace of God. Until death they bear the sinful flesh. However, God has created in them the new man, who willingly serves God. In the regenerate — and only in these — there takes place a constant struggle: the wrestling of the spirit with the flesh, in which the spirit, by the power and grace of God, is victorious and conquers the flesh as long as the Christian by faith clings to the Word and grace of God. (F. C., 608, 84. 85; Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:23, 25.)

116 9) It is God alone who is able to convert and quicken spiritually dead men, and does convert and quicken them by His grace in the Word. But, alas, not all men are converted and saved. *This is in no wise God's fault*. His grace is universal (*universalis*); it is sufficient (*sufficiens*) for all and efficacious (*efficax*) in all who hear the Word. By the preaching of His Word, God gives to all who hear it an opportunity to be converted and saved. God purposes to be efficacious in all through the Word, to give to all the power and ability to accept His Word. (F. C., 710, 29.) However, the grace of God does *not operate in an irresistible manner*. Man can resist it and block the way to the Holy Spirit and His operations of grace, so that He cannot achieve His work in man. Any one resisting the Holy Spirit continually and persistently, any one thrusting the grace of God from him continually and willfully, is not converted, but is lost by his own fault. (F. C., 602, 57–60; 713, 40–42.)

10) *Accordingly we confess*

117 a) That conversion is solely and alone the work of divine grace, which man by nature does nothing but resist, and cannot but resist, until God gives him faith;

118 b) That God earnestly desires to work conversion in all men, but "cannot perform His work" in them that are lost (F. C., 555, 12;

Triglotta, 835, 12), because by their own fault they willfully persevere in their resistance, harden themselves and become increasingly obdurate in this condition the more earnestly God operates on them by means of His Word and thus continue to heap up guilt against themselves (Matt. 23:37), until finally they may be overtaken by the condemnation of hardening.

II. Antitheses

- 119 On the basis of this truth we reject as contrary to Scripture and false any teaching by which the utter incapacity of all men for anything that is good in a spiritual respect and the monergism of divine grace in the conversion and salvation of men are denied and obscured; we also reject any teaching which finds the ultimate cause of the nonconversion even of a single person in God and His means of grace and which charges Him in any way with the fault of such nonconversion; as, for instance, the teaching
- 120 1) That man by his own natural powers or by powers communicated to him by the grace of God can in any manner omit or diminish his resistance — whether it be of the “natural” or the “willful” kind — against the gracious operation of God; or that he can in any manner contribute anything to his conversion, co-operate with God towards it, or prepare and make himself fit for the same;
- 121 2) That prior to faith man himself, either of his own accord or through powers given to him by grace, can determine to submit to the grace that is to convert him or to allow converting grace to continue its operation upon him. This “decision in favor of God” does not precede conversion (in the strict sense), but is the very conversion which God works.
- 122 3) We also reject as false and contrary to Scripture the distinction between natural and willful resistance for the purpose of offering a uniform * explanation why it is that some remain in perdition and are lost while others are converted and saved, though all are equally guilty and maintain only an evil attitude towards the converting grace of God and though grace works with equal power upon all men. By this teaching conversion and salvation are made to depend not on the grace of God alone, but also on man’s conduct.
- 123 4) Again, we reject the teaching which makes nonconversion and rejection dependent not solely upon a person’s conduct, but rather on a secret decree of God; a teaching which conceals or denies that

* A *uniform* explanation of conversion and nonconversion is offered by Synergists when they place the cause of both in man. A *uniform* explanation of conversion and nonconversion is offered by Calvinists when they place the cause of both in God.

the cause, the only cause, of nonconversion is man's willful and persistent resistance, *i. e.*, that he either does not hear God's Word, but willfully despises it, closes his ear and hardens his heart against it, and thus blocks the way which the Holy Ghost ordinarily pursues, so that He cannot perform His work in him, or, having heard it, puts it aside and disregards it;

- 124 5) Again, the teaching which employs the term "almighty grace" in the sense that God converts men by irresistible grace or by coercion;
- 125 6) Again, the teaching that in order to accomplish conversion, universal grace must be reinforced by a secret grace of election which is withheld from those who are not converted;
- 126 7) Again, the teaching that God by a secret decree has excluded from conversion those who are not converted or has passed them by with His grace;
- 127 8) Again, the teaching that God, while imparting a certain measure of grace to all, imparts only to the elect the full measure of grace sufficient for conversion.

B. Universal Will of Grace

- 128 1) Scripture teaches that everything which God has done, is doing, and will do in time here on earth, in order to acquire and appropriate to men salvation in Christ, He does in accordance with an eternal premeditated will, counsel, and purpose. (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11.)
- 129 2) God has taken pity on the fallen race of men. In the fullness of time He has sent into the world for all men His only-begotten Son, who has *acquired* perfect salvation for all, for each individual, also for me. God has done this in accordance with an eternal, premeditated counsel and will. Before the foundation of the world, He has foreordained Christ as the Redeemer of the entire human race. (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Peter 1:20.)
- 130 3) This fact, that Christ has fully acquired complete salvation for all men, God has also *revealed and made known* to all men in *the Word of the Gospel*. This Gospel of His He causes to be preached here in the world, in order that men may hear it, and thereby come to the knowledge of the truth, and thus be saved. God has done and is doing this in accordance with an eternal purpose and counsel. (Eph. 1:9.)
- 131 4) Through the Gospel, which is His ever equally efficacious means and instrument with all men, the Holy Ghost approaches the individual sinner, lost by nature, but redeemed by Christ. After having brought the sinner to a knowledge of his utter depravity and having terrified him with the anger and judgment of God by means

of the Law, the Holy Spirit earnestly purposes to bring him to faith in his Savior and thus to appropriate to him the entire salvation acquired by Christ, to justify him, to preserve him in faith by the Word, to glorify him and in this manner to carry out His work of grace unto the end. God does this in accordance with an eternal counsel and purpose.

- 132 From the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the universal will of grace, presented in the foregoing, there is kept distinct in Scripture —

C. The Doctrine of the Election of Grace, or of God's Predestination unto the Adoption of Children and unto Salvation

- 133 Without reservation we pledge our adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church regarding the election of grace, or predestination of man unto sonship, as it has been presented, on the basis of Scripture, in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord.

Preamble

- 134 In order to think and speak correctly concerning the election of grace, and in order not to exceed the barriers fixed in this doctrine by Scripture, we must learn from Scripture also the proper mode of presenting this doctrine. The apostle takes the position of the Christian readers here in time (Rom. 8:28 ff.; Eph. 1:3 ff.); he reminds them of the blessing which they hold in their possession at present; then he directs their gaze backward to the pretemporal source of that blessing. He identifies himself and his fellow Christians with the elect. Thus he would have us contemplate the eternal election of God. True, Scripture also refers elsewhere, though briefly, to the elect whom God has chosen, to the elect who are few in number as compared with the many that are called. (Matt. 22:14.) But wherever the apostles instruct Christians more fully regarding the mystery of eternity, they apply what they say to those in particular whom they are teaching. Such a direct, practical mode of contemplating the mystery guards us against unprofitable and dangerous speculations.

I. Theses

- 135 1) Holy Scripture teaches that *it is God* alone who, by grace for Christ's sake, has called us and all believers by means of the Gospel; has brought us unto faith, sanctifies and keeps us in faith, and finally saves us. However, Scripture teaches likewise that everything which God does now and will yet do for us and all believers *He has already in eternity considered in His counsel and resolved to do.* (2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13.) Conformably to Scripture and the Confessions of our Church we call this eternal purpose

of God to save us and all believers according to the universal way of salvation the foreknowing of God (Rom. 8:29), or God's predestination of men unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29), or the eternal election unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:4), or the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

136 2) The eternal election, or God's predestination unto the adoption of children, is that eternal act by which God has prepared our salvation, not only in general, but has also in particular considered in His grace us and every one of His own, has elected us unto salvation, and has decreed that, and in what way, He will call us by the Gospel, bring us to faith, keep us therein, and finally give us eternal life in Christ. (Eph. 1:4 ff.; Rom. 8:28 ff.; 1 Peter 1:2; F. C., 707, 13 to 24; *Triglotta*, 1067 ff.)

137 3) The cause of this eternal act of God concerning His children is *solely the mercy of God and the most holy merits of Christ*, who by His living, suffering, and dying has redeemed all men and reconciled them unto God. *In ourselves there is not found anything* that could in any way have prompted God to make this gracious plan concerning us. This applies also to our faith, which is not a presupposition, but a result and an effect of the predestination unto the adoption of children. (Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:28-30; F. C., 557, 20; *Triglotta*, 837; F. C., 720, 75; *Triglotta*, 1087; F. C., 723, 88; *Triglotta*, 1093.)

138 4) Accordingly, election, or predestination, is the *cause* which effects and consummates our salvation and whatever pertains thereto (hence also our faith and our perseverance therein). Upon this immutable and insubvertible counsel of God our salvation is so firmly established *that the devil, the world, and our flesh cannot deprive us of it*. (John 10:28-30; Matt. 16:18; F. C., 705, 8; *Triglotta* 1065; F. C., 714, 45-49; *Triglotta*, 1079.)

139 5) *Every Christian can and should by faith be certain of his election unto everlasting life*. He does not obtain this assurance by his natural reasoning nor by way of the Law as he reviews his good deeds, but from the Gospel promises of grace, which are sealed by the Sacraments. Accordingly, it is to the believer an insubvertible assurance; an assurance, however, which does not exclude the necessity that the Christian work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, yea, prompts him to do so. (Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:13, 14; Phil. 2:12, 13; 2 Peter 1:10; Heb. 11:1; F. C., 709, 25-33; *Triglotta*, 1071 ff.; F. C., 714, 45; *Triglotta*, 1079.)

140 6) The election of grace, or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation, which pertains only to us and all be-

lievers, is in no wise in contradiction to God's universal will of grace to save all men through Christ. While, on the one hand, the universal will of grace is the firm foundation on which the election of grace rests, the election of grace, on the other hand, serves the purpose of giving the Christian greater assurance of the universal will of grace; for it is the eternal decree of God to carry into effect this universal will of grace in us and all believers. Accordingly, by the election of grace there is effected in us, the elect, not a second, different will of grace, but the identical universal will which God earnestly entertains regarding all men and which is frustrated in those that perish by their persistent willful resistance.

141 7) This election of grace is not paralleled by an *election of wrath*, by a predestination of individual men unto perdition, by God's passing most men by with the fulness of His grace, by leaving them in their misery, by a will to work less in them, by a will to draw them less powerfully, and the like. On the contrary, God wills earnestly that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The damnation of those who are lost is not due, either directly or indirectly, to God nor to His decree of election nor to the execution of the same, but solely to the malice of men. (Matt. 22:1 ff.; 23:37; Acts 7:51; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:18 ff.; F. C., 555, 12; *Triglotta*, 835; F. C., 711, 34-42; *Triglotta*, 1075; F. C., 721, 78-86; *Triglotta*, 1089.)

142 8) In regard to the election of grace and to reprobation there is indeed much that God has not revealed in His Word and that men presumptuously desire to know. Our Confessions enumerate many mysteries of this kind, among them the following: "Likewise, when we see that God gives His Word at one place, but not at another; removes it from one place and allows it to remain at another; also, that one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.,—in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews; whereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved and would be worthy and worth to receive, since we conduct ourselves evilly over against God's Word and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit, in and with us to whom He gives His Word

and allows it to abide and whom He does not harden and reject." (F. C., 715, 54–57; *Triglotta*, 1081.) We are not to brood over these unsearchable mysteries, *but to cling to the clear Word of God, in which everything that we need to know for our salvation is plainly stated.* (F. C., 711, 33; *Triglotta*, 1073.)

143 In those who perish by their own fault we are to perceive the great earnestness of God and His appalling judgment against sin and thus be moved all the more to live constantly in the fear of God, seeing that we deserve the same fate as the reprobates, because by nature we also have only an evil attitude towards the Word of God.

144 In ourselves, who are saved, we are to perceive the pure grace of God, glorify and praise it all the more and render thanks to God also in this way, that we apply all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Anything that exceeds these limits we subordinate to the statement of Scripture in Rom. 11:33–36. (F. C., 716, 58–64; *Triglotta*, 1081.)

II. Antitheses

145 1) On the basis of these truths we reject every teaching which places the cause of election or predestination unto the adoption of children *not solely* in God's universal earnest grace and mercy and in the merits of Christ, or, generally speaking, every teaching which in any form and manner or in any respect bases election on, and explains it by, what man is, what he has, does, or refrains from doing.

146 2) On the other hand, however, we also reject on the basis of these truths every teaching by which those who believe only for a season are numbered with the elect; any teaching which in any manner mingles unbelief or backsliding as well as punishment and judgment of God with the doctrine of the election of grace and thus confounds Law and Gospel; any teaching by which different and mutually contradictory wills of grace are placed in God; any teaching by which an *irresistible* and *partial* grace is fictitiously ascribed to God; in short, any view which directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, in any way conflicts with the doctrines of Scripture regarding the *one universal grace which is equally earnest and efficacious towards all* and which in any way limits the Word of God, which states that God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For instance,

147 a) The teaching that God has elected us Christians to salvation *in preference to others (prae aliis)* by granting us, in addition to universal grace, which exists and is efficacious for all, an altogether particular grace, namely, an "election grace," by which He would lead us surely and infallibly to salvation in preference to others;

148 b) The teaching that it is due to this "election grace" that the means of grace effect conversion and salvation in some and not in others;

149 c) The teaching that it is a divine mystery, that is, a mystery in God, why the means of grace do not effect conversion in many.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase "Intuitu Fidei Finalis"

150 1) If the term "election or selection in view of persevering faith (*intuitu fidei finalis*)" is interpreted in this manner only, that God has decreed from eternity to give on Judgment Day – for the sake of the merits of Christ imputed to them – the crown of glory to those whom He Himself by His grace has brought to faith and has kept in faith unto the end, and whom by virtue of His omniscience He knows from eternity – then such an interpretation expresses indeed a truth which is clearly revealed in Scripture and which, moreover, as far as it concerns the last of the decrees passed by God regarding the elect, can indeed be included in election or predestination unto the adoption of children and unto salvation. But neither in Scripture nor in the Confessions is this action called election or predestination unto adoption and salvation. What Scripture and the Confessions call election has not taken place "*intuitu fidei*" (see C, I, 1 and 2).

151 2) It is wrong to call the truths just outlined a second form of the doctrine of God's election and predestination unto adoption of children and unto salvation; yea, rather we are confronted with two entirely different truths, which cannot be designated by *one* term without creating boundless confusion.

152 The doctrine of predestination unto adoption of children and the selection of those who continue in faith to the end unto everlasting glory differ in many points. For

153 a) The former treats of the entire salvation accorded to us (eight points) in all its details; the latter treats *only* of the last part, the consummation (*glorificatio*);

154 b) The former views the creation and preservation of faith as the result and as the execution of God's plan; the latter views the merits of Christ, apprehended by faith and kept to the end, as the basis and presupposition of the eternal decree of God;

155 c) The former knows of only *one* basis for the decree of God, *viz.*, the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been prepared; the latter knows as the basis the grace of God and the merits of Christ viewed as having been apprehended by faith and kept to the end;

156 d) The former understands by "electing" the action in eternity by

which men are taken from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of Grace; the latter understands by "electing" the segregating, the singling out, of one in preference to others for the purpose of ushering him into heaven;

157 e) The former understands by "the elect" people who are in a state of grace; the latter understands by "the elect" those who in the sight of God are believers at the last;

158 f) The former answers the questions: Whence is my past, present, and future salvation? the latter the question: Why has God decreed in eternity to place certain definite persons at His right hand?

159 g) The former is, according to F. C., 9—11 and 12 ff., the way to think and speak "correctly and profitably" of the predestination unto adoption of children; the latter is a different way of speaking regarding the action of God in eternity.

160 3) It is an undeniable fact that by the rise of the doctrine of an election *intuitu fidei finalis* and by divergent use of the term "election" involved in this doctrine, trouble and confusion have been caused; the doctrine of the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord has thereby been pushed into the background; and an unsound mixture has been produced out of both.

161 4) Since the Lutheran Church binds its ministers by a pledge to adhere to the Confessions, the doctrine of election, or predestination, unto adoption of children and unto eternal life, that is, their being ordained unto the adoption of children, etc., is the only doctrine within the Church which may justly claim to be the Church's doctrine of eternal election.

162 5) Accordingly, the only way to establish peace in the Church is for all to accustom themselves to speak as the Scriptures and the Confessions speak.

Declaration Regarding the Phrase "Cur alii prae aliis?"

163 As regards the use of the question: "Why are some converted in preference to others?" since God's grace and men's guilt are the same, we declare the following:

164 A. If the question presupposes that in the last analysis there is, either in God or in man, a uniform cause of conversion and non-conversion, of election and reprobation, the question must be rejected as false in itself and involving an error that utterly subverts a fundamental truth. Scripture and the Confessions know of no identical cause.

165 1) Scripture teaches quite clearly whence it is that men are converted and saved; *that is due solely to the grace of God* and in no

respect to the activity or conduct of man. (See Theses on Conversion, I, 1-7.)

- 166 2) With equal clearness Scripture teaches whence it is that men are not converted and saved, but remain in their lost, sinful condition: *that is solely their own fault* ("they would not") and in no wise the fault of God. (See Theses on Conversion, I, 9.)
- 167 3) By means of our reason we cannot harmonize these two Scripture truths, *viz.*, that the grace of God is the only cause of conversion and that man's fault is the only cause of nonconversion, just as we, by means of our reason, cannot bring Law and Gospel into harmony. (See Theses on Conversion, II, 3, with the footnote.)
- 168 4) Nor can we in many instances harmonize God's activity in the world with His revealed will.
- 169 We cannot and will not attempt to solve these mysteries, since Scripture does not solve them.
- 170 The above declaration we make on the basis of Rom. 11:33-36 and in agreement with the Confession of our Church, F. C., Art. XI, 52-64; M., 715 ff.; *Triglotta*, 1079 ff.
- 171 B. The question is admissible, however, if the words "*prae aliis*" do not imply a grace that exists exclusively for the elect (*gratia particularis; praeteritio*), but are used only for the purpose of calling attention to the mystery referred to in A, Points 3 and 4.
- 172 We should, however, like to point out in particular that the bare question "*Cur alii prae aliis?*" may easily lead to misunderstanding and for that reason should be avoided.

D. Theses on Other Doctrines

I. The Scriptures

- 173 1) We pledge adherence to the Holy Scriptures as the only source and norm of doctrine and faith. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21.) Over against modern theology we maintain, now as formerly, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration. (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16.) We believe and confess that Scripture not only contains God's Word, but *is* God's Word, and hence no errors or contradictions of any sort are found therein.
- 174 2) Accordingly, to us all doctrines and statements contained in Scripture are insubvertibly established, and our conscience is bound by them. (John 10:35.) Although some of them may seem or be more important or less important to our life of faith, still as regards their divine character all statements of Scripture are, to us, on the same level.

- 175 3) On the other hand, we maintain likewise that only such things as are revealed in Scripture can be an object of faith and doctrine. Although a doctrine may not offend against Scripture, no one has a right to believe or teach something as divine truth without or beyond the authority of Scripture. No error, though it seem ever so insignificant, can claim any right whatsoever.

II. Our Position as Regards the Lutheran Confessions

- 176 4) Our Confessions are a presentation and summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church, as it has found expression in its response to needs arising from time to time. They do not claim to be anything else than a confession of the faith dwelling in the heart and of saving truth to be preached in the Church of God.
- 177 5) We pledge adherence to all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not "in so far as," but "because," they are a presentation of the pure doctrine of the divine Word.
- 178 6) Accordingly, any person assuming the office of teacher in our Church must obligate himself to conduct his office in accordance with the aforementioned Confessions.
- 179 7) The pledge to adhere to the Confessions relates only to the doctrinal contents (that is, to the doctrine proclaimed as divine truth and to the rejection of contradictory teachings); however, it relates to these doctrinal contents without exception and limitation in every article and part, no matter whether a doctrine is stated expressly as a confessional doctrine or whether it is adduced only casually for the purpose of explaining, substantiating, etc., some other doctrine.
- 180 8) On the other hand, anything that pertains merely to the form of the presentation (historical remarks, purely exegetical questions, etc.) is not binding.

III. Church Fellowship

- 181 9) Church fellowship, that is, mutual recognition of Christians as brethren of the faith and their co-operation in church activities, presupposes, according to God's Word and our Confessions, their agreement in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same by word and deed. (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10, 11; M., 40, Art. 7; 337, 42; 561, 30; p. 16; *Triglotta*, 47. 517. 843. 19.)
- 182 Ignoring doctrinal differences existing at the time when church fellowship is being established and maintained or declaring them to be of no import is unionism, which fictitiously presents a unity that does not exist.
- 183 10) The rule is: "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only;

Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only." Pulpit and altar fellowship without unity in doctrine is a denial of the truth and a sin committed against the erring.

184 11) Church fellowship with a church body which persistently clings to an error in doctrine and practice must ultimately be dissolved, because unity has already been disrupted by that error.

185 12) Wherever disagreement in the confession of the one divinely revealed truth arises through the deception of Satan or the frailty of the flesh, it devolves upon us to confess the truth of the divine Word, which alone can overcome error and close the breach.

186 13) Such confession is done by word and deed and requires, in the first place, that we take our stand firmly with those who confess the truth in its purity and, in the second place, that we oppose those who falsify the truth to any degree.

187 *Note.* How an error of this kind must be treated in individual instances, however, and how long the erring must be tolerated in the hope that he can be led to forsake his error, is a problem to be solved by the brotherly love of Christians.

IV. The Church

188 14) The Church of Christ on earth, established and being built up by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, is composed of all true believers, that is, the totality of those who put their trust in the vicarious living, suffering, and dying of Christ and are united with one another by nothing else than this common faith.

189 15) Accordingly, we confess with the Apology: "However, the Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward marks, but it consists chiefly in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God. And yet, this same Church has also external marks by which it may be known; namely, where there is pure use of God's Word and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, there are Christians; and this Church only is called the body of Christ in the Scriptures." (M., 152, 5; *Triglotta*, 227.)

V. The Spiritual Priesthood

190 16) Christ has made all believers kings and priests in the sight of God, His Father, and in the saving Gospel and in the Sacraments has bestowed upon them as such all the spiritual possessions which he has acquired by His redemption.

191 17) Every Christian is to exercise this universal priesthood, *e. g.*, by his testimony in behalf of the saving truth according to opportunity and the measure of his knowledge and ability.

VI. The Pastoral Office

- 192 18) As distinct from the universal priesthood, the pastoral office, as regards its essence and purpose, consists in this, that a person qualified for this office and duly called to the same edifies, teaches, and governs a certain congregation in Christ's stead by means of God's Word and administers the Sacraments in its midst.
- 193 19) This office is of divine institution, and its functions, aforementioned, are precisely defined in God's Word. Accordingly, it is the right and duty of every Christian congregation to establish this office, and this is done by means of calling a pastor. Such action is a function of the universal priesthood.
- 194 20) The calling of a pastor is a right of that congregation in which the minister is to discharge the duties of the office, and by such calling Christ appoints His ministers for the congregation. Ordination is not a divine, but an ecclesiastical ordinance for the public and solemn confirmation of the pastor's call.

VII. Antichrist

- 195 21) As regards Antichrist, we confess with the Smalcald Articles that the Pope is "the very Antichrist" (M., 308, 10-14; *Triglotta*, 475); for among all the antichristian manifestations in the history of the Church down to the present time there is none in which all the characteristics predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2 are found as in the Papacy. The Papacy, then, being the hereditary enemy of the Church, must be fought with all earnestness. So much can be clearly seen from 2 Thessalonians 2.
- 196 22) Whether there will yet be a special development of the antichristian power, and of what character this will be, cannot be determined from the Word of God — a fact with which our faith has to be content.

VIII. Chiliasm

- 197 23) Every teaching of a millennium (Revelation 20) which turns the kingdom of Jesus Christ into an external, earthly, and secular kingdom of glory or in any manner denies the permanent cross-bearing character of the Church on earth is to be rejected as a doctrine that is in contradiction to clear statements of Scripture.
- 198 24) Even a conception of the millenium which does not bear this more or less physical character, but merely holds that a season of spiritual flourishing for the Church, or a general conversion of the Jews, or a resurrection of the martyrs prior to the Last Day, and similar events are still to be expected has, on the one hand, no clear word of Scripture to support it, and, on the other hand, is contradicted by words of Scripture that are quite clear. For this reason it must not be preached as a doctrine of Scripture. (See above, D, I, 3.)

IX. Sunday

- 199 25) Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small and in the Large Catechism is a masterly presentation of this subject as regards contents, form, and spirit.
- 200 26) Every addition to the same which in any manner prescribes some external feature, like a day or a form for worship, as if commanded by God, is not in accord with Scripture or the Confessions.

X. Open Questions

- 201 Since the phrase "open questions" is understood in various ways, we declare the following:
- 202 27) We reject as a grievous error the attempt to designate as open questions such questions as, notwithstanding the fact that they have been answered in God's Word, are to remain undecided and uncertain until they have been decided by a verdict of the Church, thus leaving everybody at liberty until then to hold his own opinion and to teach concerning them what he pleases. All doctrines clearly and plainly revealed in God's Word are definitely decided because of the unconditional authority of the divine Word, no matter whether the Confessions say anything about them or not. There exists in the Church no right whatever to deviate in any manner from the Word of God.
- 203 28) However, if by open questions are understood such questions as are not answered by Scripture, though they are suggested in the Scriptures or by the Scriptures, a difference of opinion in answering them is permissible, provided that in doing so the teaching of Scripture is not contradicted. Human opinions of this kind, however, must not be represented as doctrines of Scripture, because they go beyond Scripture. (See above, D, 1, 3.)
- 204 29) We recognize indeed that in an attempt to define the extent of the term "open questions" we meet with a difficulty. Practically, however, in any controversial case when the point in controversy is to be defined, it will be made plain by a thorough study of Scripture, whether we are dealing with an article of faith or a so-called problem in theology. In the latter case a difference in conviction must not be regarded as a cause for church division because the authority of Scripture is not impugned.
- 205 The principle expressed in the Confessions we are to heed: "That a distinction should and must by all means be observed between unnecessary and useless wrangling, on the one hand, whereby the Church ought not to be disturbed, since it destroys more than it builds up, and necessary controversy, on the other hand, as when a controversy occurs such as involves the articles of faith or the chief

heads of the Christian doctrine, where for the defense of the truth the false opposite doctrine must be reproved." (M., 572, 15; *Triglotta*, 857.)

- 206 With reference to the above theses, adopted by representatives of the Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin synods, the following separate declaration was offered by two members of the committee, to be recorded in the minutes:

Separate Declaration

- 207 The theses treat the doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children *a posteriori*, that is, from the viewpoint of believing Christians, and answer the question, "Whence is my present, past, and future salvation?" We concede the right to take this view and also give it the preference for practical ends. However, we cannot share the opinion that Scripture and the Confessions present the doctrine of election chiefly from this viewpoint and that, accordingly, *only* this form of the doctrine is to be authorized in the Church.
- 208 Furthermore, we cannot say that the so-called second form of the doctrine which has been used by our Church for more than three hundred years gives expression to another "doctrine"; we regard it rather as another "method of teaching," by which the right doctrine of election can be maintained to its full extent.
- 209 As regards the doctrinal contents of the theses, we are in complete harmony therewith.
- 210 We offer this declaration, partly because we wish to act in perfect sincerity, partly because we cannot admit that our Lutheran Church for the entire period of three hundred years did not possess the right doctrine of election, or of the predestination unto adoption of children.

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A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE EV. LUTHERAN SYNOD OF MISSOURI, OHIO, AND OTHER STATES

(Adopted 1932)

Of the Holy Scriptures

- 211 We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called "theological deduction," but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.
- 212 We furthermore teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are given by God to the Christian Church for the foundation of faith, Eph. 2:20. Hence the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged. — With the Confessions of our Church we teach also that the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*) according to which the Holy Scriptures are to be understood are the clear passages of *the Scriptures themselves* which set forth the individual doctrines. (Apologie. *Triglotta*, p. 441, § 60; Mueller, p. 284.) The rule of faith is not the man-made so-called "totality of Scripture" ("*Ganzes der Schrift*").
- 213 We reject the doctrine, which under the name of science has gained wide popularity in the Church of our day, that Holy Scripture is not in all its parts the Word of God, but in part the Word of God and in part the word of man and hence does, or at least might, contain error. We reject this erroneous doctrine as horrible and blasphemous, since it flatly contradicts Christ and His holy apostles, sets up men as judges over the Word of God, and thus overthrows the foundation of the Christian Church and its faith.

Of God

- 214 On the basis of the Holy Scriptures we teach the sublime article of the Holy Trinity; that is, we teach that the one true God, Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, three distinct *persons*, but of one and the same divine *essence*, equal in power, equal in eternity, equal in majesty, because each person possesses the one divine essence *entire*, Col. 2:9; Matt. 28:19. We hold

that all teachers and communions that deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity are outside the pale of the Christian Church. The Triune God is the God who is *gracious* to man, John 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 12:3. Since the Fall no man can believe in the "fatherhood" of God except he believe in the eternal Son of God, who became man and reconciled us to God by His vicarious satisfaction, 1 John 2:23; John 14:6. Hence we warn against Unitarianism, which in our country has to a great extent impenetrated the sects and is being spread particularly also through the influence of the lodges.

Of Creation

- 215 We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less out of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look, for a reliable account of creation, to God's own record, found in God's own book, the Bible. We accept God's own record with full confidence and confess with Luther's Catechism: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures."

Of Man and of Sin

- 216 We teach that the first man was not brutelike nor merely capable of intellectual development, but that God created man *in His own image*, Gen. 1:26, 27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10, that is, in true knowledge of God and in true righteousness and holiness and endowed with a truly scientific knowledge of nature, Gen. 2:19-23.
- 217 We furthermore teach that sin came into the world by the fall of the first man, as described Genesis 3. By this Fall not only he himself, but also all his natural offspring have lost the original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and thus all men are sinners already by birth, dead in sins, inclined to all evil, and subject to the wrath of God, Rom. 5:12, 18; Eph. 2:1-3. We teach also that men are unable, through any efforts of their own or by the aid of "culture and science" to reconcile themselves to God and thus to conquer death and damnation.

Of Redemption

- 218 We teach that in the fullness of time the eternal Son of God *was made man* by assuming, from the Virgin Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost, a human nature like unto ours, yet without sin,

and receiving it into His divine person. Jesus Christ is therefore "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," true God and true man in *one* undivided and indivisible person. The purpose of this miraculous incarnation of the Son of God was that He might become the *Mediator* between God and men, both fulfilling the divine Law and suffering and dying in the place of mankind. In this manner God has reconciled the whole sinful world unto Himself, Gal. 4:4, 5; 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19.

Of Faith in Christ

- 219 Since God has reconciled the whole world unto Himself through the vicarious life and death of His Son and has commanded that the reconciliation effected by Christ be proclaimed to men in the Gospel, to the end that they may *believe it*, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Rom. 1:5, therefore faith in Christ is the only way for men to obtain personal reconciliation with God, that is, forgiveness of sins, as both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures testify, Acts 10:43; John 3:16-18, 36. By this faith in Christ, through which men obtain the forgiveness of sins, is not meant any human effort to fulfill the Law of God after the example of Christ, but faith in the Gospel, that is, in the forgiveness of sins, or justification, which was fully earned for us by Christ and is offered in the Gospel. This faith justifies, not inasmuch as it is a work of man, but inasmuch as it lays hold of the grace offered, the forgiveness of sins, Rom. 4:16.

Of Conversion

- 220 We teach that conversion consists in this, that a man, having learned from the Law of God that he is a lost and condemned sinner, *is brought to faith in the Gospel*, which offers him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 26:18.
- 221 All men, since the Fall, are dead in sins, Eph. 2:1-3, and inclined only to evil, Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Rom. 8:7. For this reason, and particularly because men regard the Gospel of Christ, crucified for the sins of the world, as foolishness, 1 Cor. 2:14, faith in the Gospel, or conversion to God, is neither wholly nor in the least part the work of man, but the work of God's grace and almighty power alone, Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; 1:19; — Jer. 31:18. Hence Scripture calls the faith of man, or his conversion, a raising from the dead, Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12, a being born of God, John 1:12, 13, a new birth by the Gospel, 1 Peter 1:23-25, a work of God like the creation of light at the creation of the world, 2 Cor. 4:6.
- 222 On the basis of these clear statements of the Holy Scriptures we reject every kind of *synergism*, that is, the doctrine that conversion is wrought not by the grace and power of God alone, but in part also

by the the co-operation of man himself, by man's right conduct, his right attitude, his right self-determination, his lesser guilt or less evil conduct as compared with others, his refraining from willful resistance, or anything else whereby man's conversion and salvation is taken out of the gracious hands of God and made to depend on what man does or leaves undone. For this refraining from willful resistance or from any kind of resistance is also solely a work of grace, which "changes unwilling into willing men," Ezek. 36:26; Phil. 2:13. We reject also the doctrine that man is able to decide for conversion through "powers imparted by grace," since this doctrine presupposes that *before* conversion man still possesses spiritual powers by which he can make the right use of such "powers imparted by grace."

223 On the other hand, we reject also the *Calvinistic* perversion of the doctrine of conversion, that is, the doctrine that God does not desire to convert and save all hearers of the Word, but only a portion of them. Many hearers of the Word indeed remain unconverted and are not saved, not because God does not earnestly desire their conversion and salvation, but solely because they stubbornly resist the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, as Scripture teaches, Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37; Acts 13:46.

224 As to the question why not all men are converted and saved, seeing that God's grace is universal and all men are equally and utterly corrupt, we confess that we cannot answer it. From Scripture we know only this: A man owes his conversion and salvation, not to any lesser guilt or better conduct on his part, but solely to the grace of God. But any man's nonconversion is due to himself alone: it is the result of his obstinate resistance against the converting operation of the Holy Ghost, Hos. 13:9.

225 Our refusal to go beyond what is revealed in these two Scriptural truths is not "masked Calvinism" ("Crypto-Calvinism"), but *precisely* the Scriptural teaching of the Lutheran Church as it is presented in detail in the Formula of Concord (*Triglot*, p. 1081, §§ 57–59, 60 b, 62, 63; M., p. 716 f.): "That one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.,—in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's *judgment*. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews. And thereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved and would be worthy and worth, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God

and acknowledge and praise God's *goodness*, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit in and with *us*, to whom He gives His Word and with whom He leaves it and whom He does not harden and reject. . . . And this His righteous, well-deserved judgment He displays in some countries, nations, and persons in order that, when we are placed alongside of them and compared with them (*quam similimi illis deprehensi*, i. e., and found to be most similar to them) we may learn the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure, unmerited grace in the vessels of mercy. . . . When we proceed thus far in this article, we remain on the right way, as it is written, Hos. 13:9: 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help.' However, as regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should with Paul place the finger upon our lips and remember and say, Rom. 9:20: 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' The Formula of Concord describes the mystery which confronts us here not as a mystery in man's heart (a "psychological" mystery), but teaches that, when we try to understand why "one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again," we enter the domain of the unsearchable judgments of God and ways past finding out, which are not revealed to us in His Word, but which we shall know in eternal life, 1 Cor. 13:12.

- 226 Calvinists solve this mystery, which God has not revealed in His Word, by denying the *universality* of grace; synergists, by denying that salvation is by grace *alone*. Both solutions are utterly vicious, since they contradict Scripture and since every poor sinner stands in need of, and must cling to, both the unrestricted *universal grace* and the unrestricted "by grace *alone*," lest he despair and perish.

Of Justification

- 227 Holy Scripture sums up all its teachings regarding the love of God to the world of sinners, regarding the salvation wrought by Christ, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, in the article of *justification*. Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 4:25; that therefore not for the sake of their good works, but without the works of the Law, by grace, for Christ's sake, He *justifies*, that is, *accounts* as righteous, all those who believe in Christ, that is, believe, accept, and rely on, the fact that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven. Thus the Holy Ghost testifies through St. Paul: "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3:23, 24. And again: "There-

fore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law," Rom. 3:28.

228 Through this doctrine alone Christ is given the *honor* due Him, namely, that through His holy life and innocent suffering and death He is our Savior. And through this doctrine alone can poor sinners have the abiding *comfort* that God is assuredly gracious to them. We reject as *apostasy from the Christian religion* all doctrines whereby man's own works and merit are mingled into the article of justification before God. For the Christian religion is the faith that we have forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, Acts 10:43.

229 We reject as apostasy from the Christian religion not only the doctrine of the *Unitarians*, who promise the grace of God to men on the basis of their moral efforts; not only the gross work-doctrine of the papists, who expressly teach that good works are necessary to obtain justification; but also the doctrine of the *synergists*, who indeed use the terminology of the Christian Church and say that man is justified "by faith," "by faith alone," but again mix human works into the article of justification by ascribing to man a co-operation with God in the kindling of faith and thus stray into papistic territory.

Of Good Works

230 Before God only those works are good which are done for the glory of God and the good of man, according to the rule of the divine Law. Such works, however, no man performs unless he first believes that God has forgiven him his sins and has given him eternal life by grace, for Christ's sake, without any works of his own, John 15:4, 5. We reject as a great folly the assertion, frequently made in our day, that works must be placed in the fore, and "faith in dogmas" — meaning the Gospel of Christ Crucified for the sins of the world — must be relegated to the rear. Since good works never precede faith, but are always and in every instance the *result* of faith in the Gospel, it is evident that the only means by which we Christians can become rich in good works (and God would have us to be rich in good works, Titus 2:14) is unceasingly to remember the grace of God which we have received in Christ, Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 8:9. Hence we reject as unchristian and foolish any attempt to produce good works by the compulsion of the Law or through carnal motives.

Of the Means of Grace

231 Although God is present and operates everywhere throughout all creation and the whole earth is therefore full of the *temporal* bounties and blessings of God, Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28; 14:17, still we hold with Scripture that God offers and communicates to men the *spiritual* blessings purchased by Christ, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the treasures and gifts connected therewith, only through the external

means of grace ordained by Him. These means of grace are the Word of the Gospel, in every form in which it is brought to man, and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. The Word of the Gospel promises and applies the grace of God, works faith and thus regenerates man, and gives the Holy Ghost, Acts 20:24; Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23; Gal. 3:2. Baptism, too, is applied for the remission of sins and is therefore a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5. Likewise the object of the Lord's Supper, that is, of the ministration of the body and blood of Christ, is none other than the communication and sealing of the forgiveness of sins, as the words declare: "Given for you" and: "Shed for you for the remission of sins," Luke 22:19, 20; Matt. 26:28, and: "This cup is the New Testament in My blood," 1 Cor. 11:23; Jer. 31:31-34 ("New Covenant").

232 Since it is only through the external means ordained by Him that God has promised to communicate the grace and salvation purchased by Christ, the Christian Church must not remain at home with the means of grace entrusted to it, but go into the whole world with the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16. For the same reason also the churches at home should never forget that there is no other way of winning souls for the Church and keeping them with it than the faithful and diligent use of the divinely ordained means of grace. Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as "new methods," unchurchly activities, which do not build, but harm, the Church.

233 We reject as a dangerous error the doctrine, which disrupted the Church of the Reformation, that the grace and the Spirit of God are communicated not through the external means ordained by Him, but by an *immediate* operation of grace. This erroneous doctrine bases the forgiveness of sins, or justification, upon a fictitious "infused grace," that is, upon a quality of man, and thus again establishes the work-doctrine of the papists.

Of the Church

234 We believe that there is *one* holy Christian Church on earth, the Head of which is Christ and which is gathered, preserved, and governed by Christ through the Gospel.

235 The members of the Christian Church are the *Christians*, that is, all those who have despaired of their own righteousness before God and believe that God forgives their sins for Christ's sake. The Christian Church, in the proper sense of the term, is composed of believers only, Acts 5:14; 26:18; which means that no person in whom the Holy Ghost has wrought faith in the Gospel, or — which is the same thing — in the doctrine of justification, can be divested of his mem-

bership in the Christian Church; and, on the other hand, that no person in whose heart this faith does not dwell can be invested with such membership. All unbelievers, though they be in external communion with the Church and even hold the office of teacher or any other office in the Church, are not members of the Church, but, on the contrary, dwelling-places and instruments of Satan, Eph. 2:2. This is also the teaching of our Lutheran Confessions: "It is certain, however, that the wicked are in the power of the devil and members of the kingdom of the devil, as Paul teaches, Eph. 2:2, when he says that 'the devil now worketh in the children of disobedience,'" etc. (Apology. *Triglot*, p. 231. § 16; M., p. 154.)

236 Since it is by faith in the Gospel alone that men become members of the Christian Church, and since this faith cannot be seen by men, but is known to God alone, 1 Kings 8:39; Acts 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:19, therefore the Christian Church on earth is *invisible*, Luke 17:20, and will remain invisible till Judgment Day, Col. 3:3, 4. In our day some Lutherans speak of two sides of the Church, taking the means of grace to be its "visible side." It is true, the means of grace are necessarily related to the Church, seeing that the Church is created and preserved through them. But the means of grace are not for that reason a part of the Church; for the Church in the proper sense of the word consists only of *believers*, Eph. 2:19, 20; Acts 5:14. Lest we abet the notion that the Christian Church in the proper sense of the term is an external institution, we shall continue to call the means of grace the "marks" of the Church. Just as wheat is to be found only where it has been sown, so the Church can be found only where the Word of God is in use.

237 We teach that this Church which is the invisible communion of all believers, is to be found not only in those external church communions which teach the Word of God purely in every part, but also where, along with error, so much of the Word of God still remains that men may be brought to the knowledge of their sins and to faith in the forgiveness of sins, which Christ has gained for all men, Mark 16:16; Samaritans: Luke 17:16; John 4:25.

238 *Local Churches or Local Congregations.* — Holy Scripture, however, does not speak merely of the *one* Church, which embraces the believers of all places, as in Matt. 16:18; John 10:16, but also of churches in the *plural*, that is, of *local churches*, as in 1 Cor. 16:19; 1:2; Acts 8:1: the churches of Asia, the church of God in Corinth, the church in Jerusalem. But this does not mean that there are *two kinds* of churches; for the local churches also, in as far as they are churches, consist solely of believers, as we see clearly from the addresses of the epistles to local churches; for example, "Unto the church which is at Corinth, to *them that are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called

to be *saints*," 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7, etc. The visible society, containing hypocrites as well as believers, is called a church only in an improper sense, Matt. 13:47-50, 24-30, 38-43.

239 *On Church Fellowship.* — Since God ordained that His Word *only*, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Peter 4:11; John 8:31, 32; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church fellowship only with orthodox church bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate *unionism*, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.

240 The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is *actually* taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 1:3.

241 *The Original and True Possessors of All Christian Rights and Privileges.* — Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone *originally* possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church. Thus St. Paul reminds all believers: "All things are yours," 1 Cor. 3:21, 22, and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:13-19; 18:17-20; John 20:22, 23, and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as *originally* vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or the order of the ministry, or the secular lords, or councils, or synods, etc. The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, conferred on them by the original possessors of such powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17. Naturally all Christians have also the right and the duty to judge and decide matters of doctrine, not according to their own notions, of course, but according to the Word of God, 1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 4:11.

Of the Public Ministry

242 By the public ministry we mean the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered *by order and*

in the name of a Christian congregation. Concerning this office we teach that it is a *divine ordinance*; that is, the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16, but they are also required, by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work, whose qualifications and official functions are exactly defined in Scripture, Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2.

243 Although the office of the ministry is a divine ordinance, it possesses no other power than the power of the Word of God, 1 Peter 4:11; that is to say, it is the duty of Christians to yield unconditional obedience to the office of the ministry whenever, and as long as, the minister proclaims to them the Word of God, Heb. 13:17; Luke 10:16. If, however, the minister, in his teachings and injunctions, were to go beyond the Word of God, it would be the duty of Christians not to obey, but to disobey him, so as to remain faithful to Christ, Matt. 23:8. Accordingly, we reject the false doctrine ascribing to the office of the ministry the right to demand obedience and submission in matters which Christ has not commanded.

244 Regarding *ordination* we teach that it is not a divine, but a commendable ecclesiastical ordinance. (Smalcald Articles. *Triglot*, p. 525, § 70; M., p. 342.)

Of Church and State

245 Although both Church and State are ordinances of God, yet they must not be commingled. Church and State have entirely different aims. By the Church, God would save men, for which reason the Church is called the "mother" of believers, Gal. 4:26. By the State, God would maintain external order among men, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. 2:2. It follows that the means which Church and State employ to gain their ends are entirely different. The Church may not employ any other means than the preaching of the Word of God, John 18:11, 36; 2 Cor. 10:4. The State, on the other hand, makes laws bearing on civil matters and is empowered to employ for their execution also the sword and other corporal punishments, Rom. 13:4.

246 Accordingly we condemn the policy of those who would have the power of the State employed "in the interest of the Church" and who thus turn the Church into a secular dominion; as also of those who, aiming to govern the State by the Word of God, seek to turn the State into a Church.

Of the Election of Grace

247 By election of grace we mean this truth, that all those who by the grace of God alone, for Christ's sake, through the means of grace, are brought to faith, are justified, sanctified, and preserved in faith *here in time*, that all these have already from eternity been endowed by God with faith, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith, and this *for the same reason*, namely, by grace alone, for Christ's sake, and by the way of the means of grace. That this is the doctrine of Holy Scripture is evident from Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Tim. 1:9; Matt. 24:22-24 (cp. Form. of Conc. *Triglot*, p. 1065, §§ 5, 8, 23; M., p. 705).

248 Accordingly we reject as an anti-Scriptural error the doctrine that not alone the grace of God and the merit of Christ are the cause of the election of grace, but that God has, in addition, found or regarded something good *in us* which prompted or caused Him to elect us, this being variously designated as "good works," "right conduct," "proper self-determination," "refraining from willful resistance," etc. Nor does Holy Scripture know of an election "by foreseen faith," "in view of faith," as though the faith of the elect were to be placed before their election; but according to Scripture the faith which the elect have in time belongs to the spiritual blessings with which God has endowed them by His eternal election. For Scripture teaches, Acts 13:48: "And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." Our Lutheran Confession also testifies (*Triglot*, p. 1065, § 8, M., p. 705): "The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto; and upon this our salvation is so founded that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt. 16:18, as is written John 10:28: 'Neither shall any man pluck My sheep out of My hand'; and again, Acts 13:48: 'And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.'"

249 But as earnestly as we maintain that there is an election of *grace*, or a predestination to salvation, so decidedly do we teach, on the other hand, that there is no election of wrath, or predestination to *damnation*. Scripture plainly reveals the truth that the love of God for the world of lost sinners is universal, that is, that it embraces all men without exception, that Christ has fully reconciled all men unto God, and that God earnestly desires to bring all men to faith, to preserve them therein, and thus to save them, as Scripture testifies, 1 Tim. 2:4: "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." No man is lost because God has predestinated him to eternal damnation. — Eternal election is a cause why the elect are

brought to faith in time, Acts 13:48; but election is *not* a cause why men remain unbelievers when they hear the Word of God. The reason assigned by Scripture for this sad fact is that these men judge *themselves* unworthy of everlasting life, putting the Word of God from them and obstinately resisting the Holy Ghost, whose earnest will it is to bring also them to repentance and faith by means of the Word, Acts 13:46; 7:51; Matt. 23:37.

250 To be sure, it is necessary to observe the Scriptural distinction between the election of grace and the universal will of grace. This universal gracious will of God embraces all men; the election of grace, however, does not embrace all, but only a definite number, whom "God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation," 2 Thess. 2:13, the "remnant," the "seed" which "the Lord left," Rom. 9:27-29, the "election," Rom. 11:7; and while the universal will of grace is frustrated in the case of most men, Matt. 22:14; Luke 7:30, the election of grace attains its end with all whom it embraces, Rom. 8:28-30. Scripture, however, while distinguishing between the universal will of grace and the election of grace does not place the two in opposition to each other. On the contrary, it teaches that the grace dealing with those who are lost is altogether earnest and fully efficacious for conversion. Blind reason indeed declares these two truths to be contradictory; but we impose silence on our reason. The seeming disharmony will disappear in the light of heaven, 1 Cor. 13:12.

251 Furthermore, by election of grace, Scripture does not mean that *one* part of God's counsel of salvation according to which He will receive into heaven those who persevere in faith unto the end, but, on the contrary, Scripture means this, that God, before the foundation of the world, from pure grace, because of the redemption of Christ, has chosen for His own a definite number of persons out of the corrupt mass and has determined to bring them, through Word and Sacrament, to faith and salvation.

252 Christians can and should be assured of their eternal election. This is evident from the fact that Scripture addresses them as the chosen ones and comforts them with their election, Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13. This assurance of one's personal election, however, springs only from faith in the Gospel, from the assurance that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to *condemn* the world; on the contrary, through the life, suffering, and death of His Son He fully *reconciled* the whole world of sinners unto Himself. Faith in this truth leaves no room for the fear that God might still harbor thoughts of wrath and damnation concerning us. Scripture inculcates that in Rom. 8:32, 33: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,

how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Luther's pastoral advice is therefore in accord with Scripture: "Gaze upon the wounds of Christ and the blood shed for you; there predestination will shine forth." (St. Louis Ed., II, 181; on Gen. 26:9.) That the Christian obtains the personal assurance of his eternal election in this way is taught also by our Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord. *Triglot*, p. 1071, § 26; M., p. 709): "Of this we should not judge according to our reason nor according to the Law or from any external appearance. Neither should we attempt to investigate the secret, concealed abyss of divine predestination, but should give heed to the revealed will of God. For He has made known unto us the mystery of His will and made it manifest through *Christ* that it might be preached, Eph. 1:9 ff.; 2 Tim. 1:9 f." — In order to insure the proper method of viewing eternal election and the Christian's assurance of it, the Lutheran Confessions set forth at length the principle that election is not to be considered "in a bare manner (*nude*), as though God only held a muster, thus: 'This one shall be saved, that one shall be damned'" (Formula of Concord. *Triglot*, p. 1065, § 9; M., p. 706); but "the Scriptures teach this doctrine in no other way than to direct us thereby to the *Word*, Eph. 1:13; 1 Cor. 1:7; exhort to repentance, 2 Tim. 3:16; urge to godliness, Eph. 1:14; John 15:3; strengthen faith and assure us of our salvation, Eph. 1:13; John 10:27 f.; 2 Thess. 2:13 f." (Formula of Concord. *Triglot*, p. 1067, § 12; M., p. 707.) — To sum up, just as God in time draws the Christians unto Himself through the Gospel, so He has already in His eternal election endowed them with "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. 2:13. Therefore: If, by the grace of God, you believe in the Gospel of the forgiveness of your sins for Christ's sake, you are to be certain that you also belong to the number of God's elect, even as Scripture, 2 Thess. 2:13, addresses the believing Thessalonians as the chosen of God and gives thanks to God for their election.

Of Sunday

253 We teach that in the New Testament God has abrogated the Sabbath and all the holydays prescribed for the Church of the Old Covenant, so that neither "the keeping of the Sabbath nor of any other day" nor the observance of at least one specific day of the seven days of the week is ordained or commanded by God, Col. 2:16; Rom. 14:5 (Augsburg Confession. *Triglot*, p. 91, §§ 51-60; M., p. 66).

254 The observance of Sunday and other church festivals is an ordinance of the Church, made by virtue of Christian liberty. (Augsburg Confession, *Triglot*, p. 91, §§ 51-53, 60; M., p. 66. Large Catechism, *Triglot*, p. 603, §§ 83, 85, 89; M., p. 401.) Hence Christians should not regard such ordinances as ordained by God and binding upon the

conscience, Col. 2:16; Gal. 4:10. However, for the sake of Christian love and peace they should willingly observe them, Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 14:40. (Augsburg Confession, *Triglot*, p. 91, §§ 53-56; M., p. 67.)

Of the Millennium

255 With the Augsburg Confession (Art. XVII) we reject every type of Millennialism, or Chiliasm, the opinions that Christ will return visibly to this earth a thousand years before the end of the world and establish a dominion of the Church over the world; or that before the end of the world the Church is to enjoy a season of special prosperity; or that before the general resurrection on Judgment Day a number of departed Christians or martyrs are to be raised again to reign in glory in this world; or that before the end of the world a universal conversion of the Jewish nation (of Israel according to the flesh) will take place.

256 Over against this, Scripture clearly teaches, and we teach accordingly, that the kingdom of Christ on earth will remain under the cross until the end of the world, Acts 14:22; John 16:33; 18:36; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 17:20-37; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 12:28; Luke 18:8; that the second visible coming of the Lord will be His final advent, His coming to judge the quick and the dead, Matt. 24:29, 30; 25:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 9:26-28; that there will be but one resurrection of the dead, John 5:28; 6:39, 40; that the time of the Last Day is, and will remain, unknown, Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:32, 37; Acts 1:7, which would not be the case if the Last Day were to come a thousand years after the beginning of a millennium; and that there will be no general conversion, a conversion *en masse*, of the Jewish nation, Rom. 11:7; 2 Cor. 3:14; Rom. 11:25; 1 Thess. 2:16.

257 According to these clear passages of Scripture we reject the whole of Millennialism, since it not only contradicts Scripture, but also engenders a false conception of the kingdom of Christ, turns the hope of Christians upon earthly goals, 1 Cor. 15:19; Col. 3:2, and leads them to look upon the Bible as an obscure book.

Of the Antichrist

258 As to the Antichrist we teach that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist, 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18, have been fulfilled in the Pope of Rome and his dominion. All the features of the Antichrist as drawn in these prophecies, including the most abominable and horrible ones, for example, that the Antichrist "as God sitteth in the temple of God," 2 Thess. 2:4; that he anathematizes the very heart of the Gospel of Christ, that is, the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins by grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, through faith alone, without any merit or worthiness in man (Rom. 3:20-28; Gal. 2:16); that he recognizes only those as members of the Christian

Church who bow to his authority; and that, like a deluge, he had inundated the whole Church with his antichristian doctrines till God revealed him through the Reformation — these very features are the outstanding characteristics of the Papacy. (Cf. Smalcald Articles. *Triglot*, p. 515, §§ 39-41; p. 401, § 45; M., pp. 336, 258.) Hence we subscribe to the statement of our Confessions that the Pope is “the very Antichrist.” (Smalcald Articles. *Triglot*, p. 475, § 10; M., p. 308.)

Of Open Questions

- 259 Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly. Since neither an individual nor the Church as a whole is permitted to develop or augment the Christian doctrine, but are rather ordered and commanded by God to continue in the doctrine of the Apostles, 2 Thess. 2:15; Acts 2:42, open questions must remain open questions. — Not to be included in the number of open questions are the following: the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, of Sunday, of Chiliasm, and of Antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture.

Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church

- 260 We accept as our confessions all the symbols contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580. — The symbols of the Lutheran Church are not a rule of faith beyond, and supplementary to, Scripture, but a confession of the doctrines of Scripture over against those who deny these doctrines.
- 261 Since the Christian Church cannot make doctrines, but can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture, the doctrinal decisions of the symbols are binding upon the conscience not because our Church has made them nor because they are the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but only because they are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself.
- 262 Those desiring to be admitted into the public ministry of the Lutheran Church pledge themselves to teach according to the symbols not “in so far as,” but “because,” the symbols agree with Scripture. He who is unable to accept as Scriptural the doctrines set forth in the Lutheran symbols and their rejection of the corresponding errors must not be admitted into the ministry of the Lutheran Church.
- 263 The confessional obligation covers all doctrines, not only those that are treated *ex professo*, but also those that are merely introduced in support of other doctrines.
- 264 The obligation does not extend to historical statements, “purely exegetical questions,” and other matters not belonging to the doctrinal content of the symbols. All *doctrines* of the symbols are based on clear statements of Scripture.

THE SAVANNAH RESOLUTION

(Adopted by the United Lutheran Church in America 1934)

- 265 Both within and without the United Lutheran Church there are evidences of an earnest and increasing desire for the establishment of the closest possible relationships between the now separated Lutheran church groups in America. This desire has found expression during the past biennium in memorials addressed to this convention by eight of the constituent synods of this body, all of them asking that some action on this subject be taken now.
- 266 The desire for Lutheran church unity is rooted in the conviction that churches which hold a common faith ought to be laboring together at common tasks and not working at cross-purposes, still less in competition with one another. We hold this conviction with all our hearts, and we find it strengthened by our recollection of the success that has attended the co-operative efforts of the recent past, especially during and immediately after the World War.
- 267 It is still further strengthened when we consider the present state of our own nation. The forces of evil in the social order are not only deeply entrenched, but highly organized. Crime has become a business. Hostility to Christ and His Gospel has created organizations for antichristian and antireligious propaganda. Not only are there among us Societies for the Promotion of Atheism, but in every great center of population there are organized and active groups which openly proclaim their purpose to secure in our land the establishment of a godless state, based upon an utterly materialistic theory of life. These things should warn us that this is a time when Christian men and Christian groups should draw together, if only for the resistance to evils which, if unchecked and unopposed, will involve our whole social fabric in destruction.
- 268 We also recognize that the Church is confronted in these days with peculiar problems and difficulties. Its really serious problems are not administrative or economic, but have to do with matters that are fundamental to the Church's faith and life. It should be apparent to every thoughtful man that in such a time as this Christian people ought to be standing together and not apart. As Christians we believe that human nature is not altered by external circumstances and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains unchanged, no matter how human institutions may be unmade and remade. And we who do so believe should bear united testimony to this truth.
- 269 We recognize, moreover, a wide-spread tendency among Christian groups to abbreviate or dilute the Christian message in the effort to make it acceptable to the modern age and adapt it to modern thought. The doctrine of sin has been depressed by many to a theory of im-

perfection that is to be overcome by a natural development of man's inherent powers; the doctrine of redemption has been turned into a theory of the divine toleration of evil; Christ is again portrayed, as so often in the past, as merely the greatest of the sons of men; the kingdom of God is reduced to a level of a social program with a theistic background; the radical judgment which the Gospel passes upon humanity and all of its creations has been forgotten, and by that forgetfulness the glory of the forgiving and ennobling love of God has been obscured. These and similar doctrines have been put forth in many places as genuine Protestant teaching, and the Lutheran Church should unite to reject them and to proclaim in their stead the Gospel, for which it has always stood.

270 We rejoice that the Lutheran church bodies in America have held unwaveringly to the faith of the Church set forth in its historic confessions and that all of them, by official declarations, have recorded their sincere purpose to continue in their loyalty to this faith; and we are conscious of the responsibility that rests upon us all to bear clear and strong testimony to this our faith. Believing that the testimony of the Lutheran Church is weakened by the divisions that exist within it, we solemnly declare it to be our purpose to do all that is in our power to put an end to these divisions. We therefore set forth the following statement as the expression of our mind and will.

271 We recognize as Evangelical Lutheran all Christian groups which accept the Holy Scriptures as the only rule and standard for faith and life, by which all doctrines are to be judged, and who sincerely receive the historic Confessions of the Lutheran Church (especially the Unaltered Augsburg Confession) "as a witness of the truth and a presentation of the correct understanding of our predecessors" (Formula of Concord, Part II, Introd.; ed. Jacobs, p. 538); and we set up no other standards or tests of Lutheranism apart from them or alongside of them.

272 We believe that these Confessions are to be interpreted in their historical context, not as a law or as a system of theology, but as "a witness and declaration of faith as to how the Holy Scriptures were understood and explained on the matters in controversy within the Church of God by those who then lived" (Formula of Concord, Part I, Introd.; ed. Jacobs, p. 492).

273 Inasmuch as our now separated Lutheran church bodies all subscribe these same Confessions, it is our sincere belief that we already possess a firm basis on which to unite in one Lutheran Church in America and that there is no doctrinal reason why such a union should not come to pass. We believe that it would have God's blessing, and we pray that He will grant to all of us the wisdom, the courage, and the patience to accomplish it.

- 274 *We direct the President of the United Lutheran Church* to bring these resolutions to the official attention of the other Lutheran church bodies in America and to invite them to confer with us with a view to the establishment of closer relationships between them and ourselves.
- 275 *We also direct the President to appoint a commission*, of which he shall be chairman and in which the laity of the Church shall be represented, to conduct any discussions with them or with any of them that may result from this invitation.

DECLARATION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Adopted 1938)

- 276 Having carefully discussed with representatives of the Honorable Synod of Missouri, in a number of meetings, and on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses, the Chicago Theses, and the *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod*, the points of doctrine that have been in controversy between us or concerning which a suspicion of departure from the true doctrine had arisen, we now summarize what according to our conviction is the result of our deliberations in the following statements:

I. Scripture and Inspiration

- 277 a. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.
- 278 b. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own, and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, using at times even various sources at hand (Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; Luke 1:1-4). Nevertheless by virtue of inspiration, *i. e.*, the unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) by which He supplied to the holy writers contents and fitting word (1 Cor. 2:12, 13), the separate books of the Bible constitute an organic whole without contradiction and error (John 10:35) and are rightly called the Word of God.
- 279 c. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is the only source, rule, and norm for faith and life, and the ever fresh and inexhaustible fountain of all comfort, strength, wisdom, and guidance, a means of grace, for mankind (John 5:39; Rom. 1:16).

II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination, and Conversion

- 280 a. We confess that there is an eternal divine plan of salvation according to which God before the beginning of time resolved to prepare salvation for all through Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Peter 1:20; cf. 2 Cor. 5:18), and to appropriate the salvation prepared for all mankind to all men through Word and Sacrament (Luke 14:16-24; Matt. 11:28; John 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:4-7). To this end it is His purpose by His Word to work in all men true repentance and creatively to produce saving faith in them (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Peter 1:23), not irresistibly but in all cases with the same seriousness and the same

power (Luke 14:23; Is. 55:10, 11). To this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith, to preserve them in faith, and finally to glorify them (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Peter 1:5); which, however, does not exclude, but rather includes, that those who have come to faith must at all times work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12; Heb. 3:14; Col. 1:23). To this universal plan of salvation, revealed in Christ and proclaimed in the Scriptures, all Christians must adhere.

281 b. We confess that in addition there is an eternal election, or eternal purpose of God, according to which we declare with Paul that the fact that we have come to faith and will finally be saved is due to nothing whatever in ourselves nor to anything whatsoever that we have done or not done, omitted or not omitted, with natural powers or with so-called "powers of grace bestowed upon us," here in this life, but solely and alone to this eternal election, or eternal purpose, of God (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3-6; Rom. 8:28-30).

282 c. Concerning the relationship of the universal plan of salvation and the eternal election, or predestination, of those who have come to faith and are being saved, to each other, the Scripture says nothing. For that reason all attempts to combine the two and thus to explain why some come to faith and salvation and others do not, are human constructions, which should be avoided. As such a well-intended but nevertheless human construction we consider the statement of the old dogmaticians, made under peculiar circumstances, when they said that the eternal predestination took place *intuitu fidei*. That which Scripture and Confession call eternal election or predestination unto the adoption of children did not take place *intuitu fidei*.

III. The Church

283 In connection with the doctrine of the Church the question debated was, whether it is permissible to speak of a visible side of the Church when defining its essence. We declare that to do so is not a false doctrine if by this visible side nothing else is meant than the use of the means of grace.

IV. The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace

284 The office of the public administration of the means of grace is a divine institution. The power to forgive or retain sins, to preach the Law and the Gospel, has been committed by Christ not to an individual person, as Peter and his so-called successors, nor only to the twelve apostles nor to a special order, but to all Christians (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:19, 20; to be compared with Luke 24:33-36).

In order to have one in its midst who exercises this power publicly, in its name and by its order, the Christian congregation calls a capable person. By the call the congregation erects the office of the public administration of the means of grace in its midst. Ordination is the confirmation of the call; it is not a divine but a commendable human ordinance.

V. The Doctrine of Sunday

- 285 That which is contained on this point in the *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States* is *publica doctrina* among us.

VI. The Doctrine Concerning the Last Things

A. In General

- 286 When considering the question concerning the Antichrist, the future conversion of Israel, the resurrection of the martyrs, and the millennial reign of Christ, the fact must not be overlooked that we are dealing here with the correct understanding of prophecy and fulfillment, that this understanding is not always easy, and that even in the days of Christ the believers had an entirely different conception of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in many points than actually occurred, but that nevertheless the fulfillment coincided exactly with the prophecy. We are certain that the same will be the case with respect to the New Testament prophecy. Not only will the great events which even now stand out clearly and unmistakably in the prophecy of Jesus and His apostles — the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final Judgment, the passing away of the old world and creation of the new heaven and the new earth, the twofold termination of all history in eternal life or eternal damnation — find their realization, but even the individual details will be fulfilled, though the latter perhaps in a manner entirely different from that which some of the faithful expect on the basis of their understanding of Scripture. However, since all New Testament revelation constitutes a unity, nothing should be taught concerning the subjects named in our introductory sentence that would involve a negation of the following truths:

- 287 1. That as Christians we must at all times be ready for the return of Christ;
- 288 2. That as Christians we are bound, until the return of Christ, to the use of the means of grace and to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel;
- 289 3. That the Church on earth, until the return of Christ, will continue to be a kingdom of the cross.

B. *In Particular*, we confess the following:

- 290 a. In regard to the Antichrist we accept the historical judgment of Luther in the Smalcald Articles (Part II, Art. IV:10) that the Pope is the very Antichrist (German: "der rechte Endechrist oder Widerchrist"), because among all the antichristian manifestations in the history of the world and the Church that lies *behind us in the past*, there is none that fits the description given in 2 Thessalonians 2 better than the Papacy, particularly since the denial of the fundamental article of the Scripture on the part of the Papacy, *viz.*, the justification of the sinner by grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, by faith alone, constitutes the worst perversion imaginable of the very essence of Christianity and inevitably carries with it the dissolution of every God-pleasing moral world order.
- 291 The answer to the question whether in the *future that is still before us*, prior to the return of Christ, a special unfolding and personal concentration of the antichristian power already present now, and thus a still more comprehensive fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2 may occur, we leave to the Lord and Ruler of Church and world history.
- 292 b. With reference to the question concerning the conversion of Israel, which some find indicated especially in Rom. 11:25, 26, we declare with Dr. Walther that to assume such a conversion "must not be regarded as a cause for division" (Milwaukee-Kolloquium, p. 156).
- 293 c. With reference to the assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs, which some find indicated in Rev. 20:4, we declare that we are not ready to deny church fellowship to anyone who holds this view, merely on that account, since we cannot consider the argument that this assumption violates the analogy of Scripture as cogent (cf. Matt. 27:52, 53) and since the representatives of this opinion do not assume a rule of the martyrs here on earth but hold that they go directly to heaven and rule there with Christ.
- 294 d. With reference to the thousand years of Revelation 20 we declare with Dr. Walther (Milwaukee-Kolloquium, p. 157) that "it is not possible to say with absolute certainty either that the thousand years have already been fulfilled or that they still lie in the future." If they should still lie in the future, nothing must be taught concerning the then existing Church on earth that would contradict the limitation stated under VI, A.
- 295 With other points of doctrine presented in the *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* we are conscious of being in agreement. We also believe that in the points touched upon in Sections I-IV the *Brief Statement* is correct in all essential points; however, we were of the opinion that it would be well in part to supplement them in the manner stated above, in part also to emphasize

those of its points which seemed essential to us. With reference to Section VI, B, we expect no more than this, that the Honorable Synod of Missouri will declare that the points mentioned there are not disruptive of church fellowship.

296 If the Honorable Synod of Missouri will acknowledge Sections I, II, IV, V, and VI, A, together with the statements following after VI, B, concerning our attitude toward the *Brief Statement*, as correct, and declare that the points mentioned in Sections III and VI, B, are not disruptive of church fellowship, the American Lutheran Church stands ready officially to declare itself in unity of faith and doctrine with the Honorable Synod of Missouri and to enter into pulpit and altar fellowship with it.

297 At the same time we recognize it as our duty to do what we can to bring about the acceptance of these doctrinal statements by the bodies with which we are now in fellowship.

BALTIMORE DECLARATION OF THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Adopted 1938)

- 298 [Resolved] that the United Lutheran Church in America, in view of the need of the world today for a clear testimony to the saving truth of God in Christ and in the belief that this clear testimony can be given by a statement concerning the Word of God and the Scriptures, adopt the following declaration, which it holds to be in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures as interpreted in our Confessions:

The Word of God and the Scriptures

- 299 I. We believe that "the only rule and standard according to which all dogmas and teachers are to be esteemed and judged are nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament" (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Introd., I, cf. Sol. Dec., Comp. Summary, 1). We also accept the teaching of the whole Lutheran Church that the Scriptures have this unique authority because they are the Word of God.
- 300 II. Both in the Scriptures and in the Confessions of the Church this term "Word of God" is used in more than one sense. For this reason it is important that we should understand what these different senses are and what we mean when we call the Scriptures by this name.
- 301 III. We believe that in its most real sense the Word of God is the Gospel, *i. e.*, the message concerning Jesus Christ, His life, His work, His teaching, His sufferings and death, His resurrection and ascension, for our sakes, and the saving love of God thus made manifest in Him.
- 302 We believe that in and through this Gospel the Holy Spirit comes to men, awakening and strengthening their faith and leading them into lives of holiness. (Cf. Explanation of the Third Article in Luther's Small Catechism.) For this reason we call the Word of God, or the Gospel, a means of grace (A. C., Arts. V, XX; F. C., Epitome, chap. II:4-6, 19).
- 303 IV. We believe that in a wider sense the Word of God is that revelation of Himself which began at the beginning of human history, continued throughout the ages, and reached its fullness and completion in the life and work of Jesus Christ our Lord (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1 ff.).
- 304 We believe that this revelation was given to men chosen and inspired by God Himself to interpret the historical events in which God made Himself known.
- 305 V. We believe that the whole revelation of God to men which reached completion in Christ, the crucified and risen Savior, is faithfully recorded and preserved in the Holy Scriptures, through which alone it comes to us. We therefore accept the Scriptures as the infal-

lible truth of God in all matters that pertain to His revelation and our salvation.

- 306 We also believe that the Scriptures are now, and will be for all time to come, God's revelation of Himself. And because He continues to make Himself known through them, we believe that the Scriptures also are the Word of God; and this is the third sense in which that term is used.
- 307 VI. We believe that, as God's revelation is one and has its center in Jesus Christ, so the Scriptures also are a unity, centering in the same Lord and Christ. Therefore we believe that the whole body of the Scriptures in all its parts is the Word of God.
- 308 The Scriptures have their more important and their less important parts, and the measure of their importance must always be the closeness of their relation to Christ, our Lord, and to the Gospel, which is the Word of God in the most real sense (see above, No. III).
- 309 We believe that there is a difference between the Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. The Old Testament is chiefly prophecy, the New Testament fulfillment of this prophecy. The Scriptures of the Old Testament testify of the Christ who was to come (John 5:39; Luke 4:21; Luke 24:27; 2 Cor. 1:20). The Scriptures of the New Testament are God's testimony to the incarnate Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who by His suffering, death, and resurrection has reconciled us to God and has committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). Nevertheless, every portion of the Scriptures has its own place in God's total revelation of Himself.
- 310 We believe that the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament have been sanctioned by the Lord Jesus Himself and His apostles (Matt. 5:17 f.; John 10:35; Rom. 1:2; 1 Cor. 15:3, etc.). We also believe that the Scriptures of the New Testament were accepted as canonical by the Christian Church under the guidance of the same Spirit of Truth of whom the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "He shall guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).
- 311 VII. We believe that the whole body of the Scriptures is inspired by God.
- 312 God's saving truth, which comes to us through the Scriptures, and not otherwise, is God's own revelation of Himself. The writers of the Scriptures have been His agents in its transmission. The power to receive and record it has been bestowed by Him. The act of God, by which this power was conferred, we call by the Scriptural name of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16).
- 313 We do not venture to define the mode or manner of this inspiration, since God's ways of using human instruments are past our finding

out. But we accept the inspiration of the Scriptures as a fact of which our faith in God, through Christ, assures us, and this assurance is supported by words of Scripture in which the fact of inspiration is asserted or implied (1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

314 The Scriptures are God's testimony to His Son, who is their Center (see above, No. V). They are God's Word, the means through which God leads us to faith in Christ (see above, No. III), and in our faith we see their testimony as God's own. Thus we know that they come from Him, are inspired by Him, and are God's Word.

315 VIII. Holding these things to be true, we believe that the Scriptures are:

1. The spring from which the saving power of God continuously flows into the lives of men;
2. The only source of truly Christian doctrine; and
3. The only rule and norm for Christian faith and life.

PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT

(Adopted by ALC and ULCA 1940)

I

- 316 That all persons affiliated with any of the societies or organizations designated in the Washington Declaration of the U. L. C. A. as "organizations injurious to the Christian faith" should sever their connections with such society or organization and shall be so admonished; and members of our churches not now affiliated with such organizations shall be warned against such affiliation. Especially shall the shepherds of the flocks be admonished to refuse adherence and support to such organizations.

II

- 317 That pastors and congregations shall not practice indiscriminate pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and churches of other denominations, whereby doctrinal differences are ignored or virtually made matters of indifference. Especially shall no religious fellowship whatsoever be practiced with such individuals and groups as are not basically evangelical.

III

- 318 1. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is primarily not a code of doctrines, still less a code of morals, but the history of God's revelation, for the salvation of mankind, and of man's reaction to it. It preserves for all generations and presents, ever anew, this revelation of God, which culminated and centers in Christ, the Crucified and Risen One. It is itself the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.
- 319 2. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, even at times using such sources of information as were at hand. Nevertheless, by virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Ghost (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21), by which He supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word (2 Peter 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:12, 13), the separate books of the Bible are related to one another and, taken together, constitute a complete, errorless, unbreakable whole, of which Christ is the Center (John 10:35). They are rightly called the Word of God. This unique operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers is named inspiration. We do not venture to define its mode, or manner, but accept it as a fact.

320 3. Believing, therefore, that the Bible came into existence by this unique co-operation of the Holy Spirit and the human writers, we accept it (as a whole and in all its parts) as the permanent divine revelation, as the Word of God, the only source, rule, and norm for faith and life, and as the ever fresh and inexhaustible foundation of all comfort, strength, wisdom, and guidance for all mankind.

COMMON CONFESSION

(Part I adopted by The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and by the American Lutheran Church 1950. Part II approved by the American Lutheran Church 1953. The Common Confession, one document composed of Parts I and II recognized as a statement in harmony with the sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions by The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod 1956, but not to be regarded or employed as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies.)

PART I

- 321 In order to give expression to our common Christian Faith, we hereby declare the following to be our mutual conviction and testimony:

We believe and teach: **I. God**

- 322 The one and only God is the God who has revealed Himself to us as the Creator of the world and its Preserver, to whom the entire creation and all creatures are subject, who is the Lord and Ruler over all things. Through the Holy Scriptures He has revealed Himself to us as the Righteous and Holy One and also as the God of our salvation from sin and death. He has designated and manifested Himself as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification. We therefore confess our faith in this Triune God, three distinct Persons in the one Godhead.

- 323 All men can know of the existence and activity of God, deriving such knowledge from the creation of the world, their own conscience, and history. But who God is, how He is minded toward man, and what He has done for man's salvation from sin, can be known only from God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ through the Holy Scriptures. In Jesus Christ, God became incarnate. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John 1:14.

Cf. Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31; Romans 1:19, 20; 2:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; Ephesians 2; Colossians 1; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 1-2.

We believe and teach: **II. Man**

- 324 God in the beginning created man in His own image to live according to His Law which God had written into man's heart; but man disobeyed God and thereby became a sinner, alienating himself from God, and bringing sin and death upon himself and all his pos-

terity. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12. Therefore all men are born into this world with original sin; and being unable to observe God's divine commands, they willfully continue to transgress God's holy Law in thoughts, words, and deeds. Man as sinner has delivered himself into the bondage of sin and of the devil, from which man cannot free himself by his own powers. From this desperate condition and tyranny only God can set man free.

Cf. Genesis 1-3; Psalms 51 and 130; Romans 1-7; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 2:14-18.

III. Redemption

We believe and teach:

- 325 God from eternity decreed to send, and in the fullness of time did send, His Son to fallen man as Savior, to fulfill the Law in the sinner's stead and to suffer the sinner's punishment in his stead. Christ "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification," Romans 4:25. God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all," Isaiah 53:6. Christ entered into death in order to bring man, held in the grip of death, unto life with Himself. In His victory over death He brings to man a life of freedom from death. God by raising Christ from the dead proclaimed to the world that He has accepted the atonement for man's sin as completed and that Christ, the risen and exalted God-Man, shall reign as Lord forever.

Cf. Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:28; Luke 24; John 11 and 14; Acts 2:22-36; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; 1 Peter 1:18-25.

IV. Election

We believe and teach:

- 326 God from eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life. The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of His glory.

Cf. Acts 13:48; Romans 8; Ephesians 1; 1 Peter 1:1-9.

V. Means of Grace

We believe and teach:

- 327 God has willed that the knowledge and benefit of Christ's redemption from sin be brought to man through His means of grace, namely, through the Gospel in the Word and in the Sacraments. Through

these means He not only offers but actually bestows His grace in Christ unto forgiveness of sins and a life of fellowship with Him.

328 *The Word.* Through the Holy Scriptures, which God caused to be written by men chosen and inspired by Him, God instructs and assures us regarding His will for us. The Holy Scriptures constitute His Word to men, centering in the revelation of Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Through the Holy Scriptures God continues to speak to men in all ages until the end of time. He speaks as the infallible and unchanging God, whose message to mankind never changes. Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God. His Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and that our faith in Him is not in vain.

329 We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith (cf. Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II). We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures.

330 The Holy Scriptures teach both Law and Gospel, but the chief content of the Holy Scriptures is the Gospel. The Law enters into the service of the Gospel by bringing man to a knowledge of his sins and by convincing him that he is under God's judgment because of his sins, and by telling the believer what fruits of faith he should produce.

331 *Baptism.* In the Sacrament of Baptism, God adopts men as His children. In Baptism, God confers the benefits of Christ's redemption and graciously bestows the washing of regeneration and newness of life. We recognize it as the Lord's will that men should be baptized even in their infancy, knowing that the promise of God also applies to little children.

332 *The Lord's Supper.* In the Sacrament of the Altar, Christ gives us His body, offered up for us, and His blood, shed for us, to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our faith, and the increase in holiness of life. In this Sacrament we receive Christ's body and blood orally as well as spiritually. All communicants receive Christ's precious body and blood together with the bread and wine, but only the believers obtain the blessings of the Sacrament. Christ is not only present at the celebration of the Sacrament, but in this Sacrament He enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church, bringing to them His body and His blood by which He made atonement for their sins.

Cf. The Word: 1 Corinthians 1-2; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; 1 Peter 1; 2 Peter 1:12-21.

Baptism: Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:1-13; Acts 2:37-39; Romans 6; Titus 3:4-7.

Lord's Supper: Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:23-29.

VI. Justification

We believe and teach:

- 333 By His redemptive work Christ is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence forgiveness of sin has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation," 2 Corinthians 5:19. Hence no sinner need be eternally lost on account of his sins. God offers this propitiation and reconciliation freely to all men through His means of grace. There is nothing in sinful man or in what he may do to merit God's declaring him righteous. God justifies the sinner solely on the basis of Christ's righteousness, which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith. Such faith is wrought in man by the Holy Spirit. Through this faith we not only receive from God but also retain the blessed assurance of our righteousness in His sight for Christ's sake.

Cf. Romans 3-5; Galatians 2:16-3:29; Colossians 1; 1 John 2:2.

VII. Conversion

We believe and teach:

- 334 The sinner's conversion takes place when God brings the contrite sinner to faith in Christ as his Savior. This change of heart with respect to sin, and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin, is the work of God the Holy Spirit, without any co-operation whatsoever from sinful man. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Corinthians 12:3 b.

Cf. Acts 5:31; 26:18; Ephesians 2:1-9; Jeremiah 31:18, 19; Ezekiel 11:19, 20.

VIII. Sanctification

We believe and teach:

- 335 The believer in Christ can no longer enjoy living in sin, but he is prompted and enabled by the love of God in Christ and by the indwelling Holy Spirit to live according to God's commandments and to be minded toward all things as God is minded. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;

and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me," Galatians 2:20.

336 We therefore, out of gratitude to God, seek to glorify Him by abounding in good works, without which faith is dead. In glorifying God we seek to serve Him and our neighbor in love, as He directs us in both tables of His Law.

337 In this present world the Christian can never attain perfect sinlessness, because sin inheres in him until death. But we strive for the goal that is set before us and by daily contrition and faith make progress in our Christian life. We look forward to the life to come, when we shall be cleansed of every defilement of sin and shall share with Christ His perfect life.

Cf. Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 7:1; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:13; 3:12; Colossians 1:10; 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 1:15; 1 John 3:6-9.

IX. The Church

We believe and teach:

338 All believers in Christ constitute the one, holy, Apostolic (in agreement with the Apostles' doctrine), and catholic (universal) Church. Jesus Christ is its Head. Through the means of grace He calls all members into fellowship with Himself and also unites the members in fellowship with one another.

339 To all members of His Church the Lord has given all the rights and prerogatives set forth in His Word. Every Christian has the right of direct access to God without a human mediator.

340 To the Church has been given the commission to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. It is therefore the duty of Christians to unite in local congregations for this purpose. In such local congregations the presence or activity of any unbelievers or hypocrites does not nullify the power of the Word of God. The efficacy of the means of grace does not depend on the faith of the administrant, but inheres in the Word of God itself.

341 In this present world, Christ does not promise His Church any earthly reign over the affairs of men. His Church will remain a kingdom of the cross until His return for Judgment; but He will sustain it according to His promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. 16:18 b.

342 It is the duty of the Church to be faithful to its Lord and His Word in all its testimony, to be steadfast in its confession of His truth at all times, and to avoid and combat error. It is the duty of the Church to mold and keep its practice in conformity with the Lord's directives in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore we dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural co-operation

with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word. We must also be alert and susceptible to the Lord's leading to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom He has made one with us in the faith and to seek to win the erring and wayward for unity in the true faith. We are mindful of our Lord's intercessory prayer that we, who are His brethren, may be one, even as He and the Father are one.

Matthew 28; John 8:31, 32; 15; 17; 20:22, 23; Romans 12:3-8; 16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:12; Ephesians 2; 4:1-16; 5:6-11; Colossians 1; 1 Timothy 6; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9, 10.

X. The Ministry

We believe and teach:

- 343 The ministry of the Word and Sacraments exists by divine ordinance. God continues to call men into this holy office and entrusts the spiritual welfare of His congregations to these pastors as His gifts to the Church. It is the will of God that congregations choose as their pastors only such men as have the qualifications outlined in the Holy Scriptures. Pastors are required by God to be faithful and as faithful pastors are entitled to the love and respect of their congregations.

Cf. Acts 20:28; Romans 10:12-18; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 4; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Timothy 3; 5:17; Hebrews 13:7-17.

XI. The Lutheran Confessions

We believe and teach:

- 344 The Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord, 1580) are true exhibitions of the truths of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore it is rightly required that every pastor and congregation in the Lutheran Church subscribe to and uphold the doctrines taught in these confessions without any omission, deviation, or reservation.

XII. The Last Things

We believe and teach:

- 345 The Church of Jesus Christ will exist and endure on earth, according to the promises of Christ, until His return for Judgment. When Christ returns for Judgment, He will raise up all the dead — all believers in Him to eternal life, and all others to everlasting damnation.
- 346 Among the signs of His approaching return for Judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, are still clearly discernible in the Roman Papacy, the climax of all human usurpations of Christ's authority in the Church. We hold it to be an error to teach anything as a sign of Christ's second advent

not promised or foretold in the Holy Scriptures, such as the expectation of a mass conversion of the Jews, a preliminary resurrection of martyrs, and a visible millennial reign of Christ on the earth before the Day of Judgment.

347 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Peter 1:3-9.

348 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," 1 John 3:2.

Cf. Matthew 16:18; John 5:28, 29; 6:40; 18:36; Romans 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 20.

THE COMMON CONFESSION

PART II

- 349 In the belief that our common conviction and testimony regarding the Christian faith as expressed in the *Common Confession* must express itself in the life and corporate activity of the Church, we submit the following statements as indicative of, and normative for, Christian life in our congregations and Synods:

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

I. The Church's Mission

350 COMPANY OF THE REBORN

The Church, as the company of those who are born again, is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It confronts a mankind which without the gracious working of the Holy Spirit is totally corrupt in trespasses and sins, is completely blinded to the will of God, and willfully resists every endeavor of God to save it from destruction. It is the privilege of the Church to proclaim in word and deed the glorious redemption of all men in Christ. God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Timothy 2:4. It is the duty of the Church to testify that salvation is wholly and solely in and through Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12.

351 COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The Church, as the communion of saints, enjoys fellowship with God and is nourished and sustained by His presence and by His activity in the means of grace. God speaks to the assembled congregation in the Word and Sacraments and the assembly of believers responds in hymns and prayers of adoration, intercession, petition, and thanksgiving to God. Through the Word and the Sacraments God constantly assures the Church of its status before Him and enables it to fulfill its function in the world. The Church thus enabled is commissioned by God to "show forth His salvation from day to day," to "declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people," Psalm 96:2, 3.

352 BELOVED OF GOD

The Church, as the beloved of God, reflects its love for God by ministering to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church seeks and works for the complete well-being of all men. "This command-

ment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also," 1 John 4:21.

Matthew 5:13-16; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 2:8-10.

John 14:23; Exodus 20:24; John 8:31, 32; 1 Timothy 2:1; Philip-
pians 2:15, 16; 2 Timothy 1:7-14; 4:1-5.

Matthew 25:31-40; Galatians 6:10; 1 John 4:7-21; Luke 10:25-37.

II. The Church's Resources

353 PRESENCE OF GOD

The Lord, who commissions the Church to preach the Gospel to every creature, promises to be with it unto the end of the world. He sends His Spirit to dwell in the Church forever and to bring to its remembrance all things which Christ as its Head has said and still says in the Scriptures. As the Church faithfully proclaims His Word, Christ's promise, "He that heareth you, heareth Me," is fulfilled, Luke 10:16. He to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth has promised to grant whatsoever the Church needs and asks in His name.

354 MEANS OF GRACE

As the Good Shepherd Christ guides and guards the Church through perils and assaults in a hostile world, and the Holy Spirit as the Chief Builder cleanses and sanctifies the Church as the habitation of God. Through the means of grace, the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, and thus directs and enables it to do the will of God. Where these means of grace are in use, there God builds His Church.

355 GOD'S GIFTS

The Lord always bestows His gifts on the Church in a generous and abundant measure. He gives to the Church pastors after His own heart who preach God's Word and administer the Sacraments in the name of the Christian congregation. He also calls and equips other workers for their respective and diverse ministrations of love in every generation.

356 ASSURANCE OF VICTORY

God's Word never returns unto Him void, but always accomplishes that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereto He sends it. Through the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments He is at work in and through the Church to call men from sin and death and to make them heirs of everlasting life. Those who believe in Him enjoy fellowship

with Him forever, are made laborers together with God in the work of His kingdom, and by their faith triumph over the world. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," 1 John 5:4.

Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:26; 16:23, 24.

John 17; Ephesians 5:25-27; 2:14-22; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 1:16.

Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Acts 6:1-7; John 13:12-15.

Isaiah 55:10, 11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; John 5:24; 8:31, 32; Acts 2:38-40; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1.

III. The Church and Its Ministrations

357 UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD

All members of the Church are royal priests. In calling a pastor to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments on their behalf, the members of a local congregation exercise their royal priesthood and by no means relinquish it. The privilege and the responsibility of ministering to the saints of God remain the privilege and responsibility of all the members of the Church.

358 INDIVIDUAL AND UNITED ACTIVITY

From the exercise of this ministry no one is exempt. Every Christian, man or woman, old or young, rich or poor, skilled or unskilled, learned or unlearned, as God gives power and opportunity, is to edify the Church of God; to feed the lambs and the sheep; to instruct and encourage others; to visit the sick and help the needy and distressed; to seek, admonish, rebuke, forgive, and restore the erring; to judge and remove false teaching; to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; to speak in defense of all the saints, being ready to give an answer to anyone concerning the hope that is in them; and to support with prayers and gifts the exercise of this ministry in areas and spheres which he himself cannot reach. Christian congregations and synods take counsel and co-operate with each other in seeking God-pleasing and effective ways to perform the work the Lord has assigned to all members of His Church.

359 UNIVERSAL APPLICATION

The blessings of this ministry are meant for all races and conditions of men. From these blessings no one may be excluded, since no one is excluded from the forgiveness spoken by God to the world in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Christian love, having its source in that forgiving love of God, is spontaneous and unrestricted and knows no barrier of race, class, or color, even as

Christ is the Propitiation not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 2:10.

Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; 14:29; Jeremiah 23:9-40; Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:1-6; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 John 4:1-6.

2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:19-22; 1 John 4:7-21; Hebrews 9:26; Acts 17:24-28; 1 John 2:2.

IV. The Church and the Home

360 MARRIAGE

God has ordained and blessed the estate of marriage and has established the relation of mutual helpfulness and love between husband and wife. Marriage is intended by God to be a lifelong union. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder," Matthew 19:6.

361 PARENTS AND CHILDREN

In love and wisdom God has blessed the marriage state with the privilege and responsibility of parenthood. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," Genesis 1:28. "Children are an heritage of the Lord," Psalm 127:3. Parents are responsible for their children and should rear them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. God has established the home as the foundation of society and the training school for Christian character. Over against the sins of impurity, infidelity, neglect, and all other causes that may lead to divorce, the Church emphasizes the sacredness of the home and the blessedness of the parent-child relationship.

362 CHRISTIAN HOME

The Church under the impulse of Christ's Gospel counsels the youth, encourages Christian companionship, upholds purity of life, and teaches God's will regarding courtship and marriage. The Church upholds the all-inclusive character of the home, where the old and the new generations meet together in love and esteem. To rear children in the fear of God and to care for aged and infirm members of the family remain the responsibility of the family.

363 FAMILY WORSHIP

Christians enjoy the blessings of the family altar, where God's Word is read and the entire household unites in prayer. Christian parents present their little ones to be baptized as early as possible and regularly bring their entire household to the house of God for worship and spiritual growth and understanding. When parents fail to recognize and discharge their duties as God's representatives in the home, God will hold them responsible for any resulting delinquency of their

children. Christian parents remember Joshua's example, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," Joshua 24:15.

Genesis 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:22-33; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

Psalms 127; Ephesians 6:1-4.

Ecclesiastes 11:19-12:1; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Timothy 2:22; Malachi 4:6; 1 Timothy 5:4.

Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Colossians 3:16; Mark 10:14; Hebrews 10:23-25; Ephesians 6:3.

V. The Church and Vocation

364 CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Every earthly relationship is sanctified through fellowship with God, and for the Christian, whatever his vocation may be, the whole of life is a sacred stewardship from God. The Church, therefore, recognizes and proclaims the dignity of all labor that glorifies God and serves the welfare of man. All believers are responsible servants of God; and their time, talents, and treasure are a sacred trust from God, to be employed for Christ in their respective vocations. As a steward of God the individual Christian constantly faces the question, "Is my vocation God-pleasing?" The choice or change of his vocation must be prompted not by selfish gain, but by a desire for better service to God and man according to the abilities which God has granted to him. The Church reminds its members to heed the divine injunction, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," Ecclesiastes 9:10, in the assurance that a good and perfect kind of life is one which has for it the commandment of God.

365 MANAGEMENT AND LABOR

In the relation of management and labor the Church is obligated to proclaim to its people with strength the twin admonitions, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven," Colossians 4:1. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ," Colossians 3:22-24. The emphasis in all management-labor relations should not be on selfish or unfair gain, nor on depriving others of the benefit of their labors, but on unselfish Christian service to the neighbor and the community.

366 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

God blesses such labor and through it provides the necessities of life for the individual and his dependents, the things that are good

and beautiful, and maintenance of good government. Above all, He supplies the means for the support and extension of His kingdom and the resources for that Christian charity which has compassion upon the neighbor and promptly and personally supplies his need. The Christian views the fruits of his labor as blessings bestowed upon him by God and as a trust to be administered to the glory of God.

1 Timothy 4:4, 5; Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13.

Proverbs 3:5-10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 5:1-6; Philippians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12; Matthew 7:12.

Psalms 145:15, 16; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:9, 10; Matthew 25:31-40; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Chronicles 29:10-19.

VI. The Church and Education

367 THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Church continues to heed Christ's charge to go into all the world and to make disciples of all men, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.

368 BIBLE IN EDUCATION

The Church has the duty to provide for all its members throughout their lives the best possible instruction in the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word, that is, God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words which He wanted employed. They alone constitute God's inerrant Word to men. They alone are "able to make" men "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Timothy 3:15. They alone train men in holy living. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

369 CHRIST-CENTERED EDUCATION

The Church places all the arts and sciences in the service of God and therefore brings the Word of God to bear on education at all levels for all professions and occupations. It insists that education for a God-pleasing life must be Christ-centered. Therefore it considers incomplete any program of education which omits as its paramount consideration the existence and activity of the Triune God in the world. The Church corrects such programs with its own program of teaching the truths revealed by God in His Word. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," Matthew 6:33.

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Isaiah 40:9; John 14:6-23; 8:12.

2 Peter 3:17, 18; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 78:1-8; John 10:35; 6:63; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:19.

Psalm 19:7-14; 111:10; Acts 17:24-28; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 1 Timothy 4:8.

VII. The Church and Government

370 GOD AND GOVERNMENT

The Church recognizes governmental authority as ordained of God, as subject to the will of God, and as designed to seek the good of its citizens. It is the function of such government as God's representative to punish those who do wrong, to approve those who do right, and to protect all from injustice. The Church supports such government by admonishing its members to obey the laws, to pay taxes, and to render personal service in time of peace and war as the government may require, provided only that "we ought to obey God rather than men," Acts 5:29.

371 CHRISTIAN AND GOVERNMENT

The Church calls upon its members to pray and work for good government. They are enjoined not only to keep themselves unspotted from the evils of the world, but are also called upon to work as citizens for the eradication of evil practices in government. To assist in the nomination and election of honest men to public office, to promote the enactment and enforcement of proper and salutary legislation, to encourage Christian men and women to hold public office, and to support all officers in the faithful exercise of their duties, remain responsibilities of all Christian citizens. The liberty of Christian witness should not be abused to heap disrespect upon the incumbents of government offices, however frail these officers may be. The Church constantly prays "for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Timothy 2:2. God's Word requires that government officers administer their high trust with integrity, sobriety, and humility, for they shall be judged by God.

372 CHRISTIAN AND WAR

The Church recognizes war as an evil and emphasizes that sins, both personal and national, are the cause of war, and earnestly stresses the need of repentance. If repentance does not take place, the judgment of God may become evident in war. In times of war as well as in times of peace the Church proclaims the will of God for all men, combats the passions of hatred and revenge, and always seeks to alleviate the suffering caused by war. Christians, while careful not to provoke war or resort to war, nevertheless in times of war have the responsibility to defend their country when in danger or under attack from its enemies.

Romans 13; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1, 2; Matthew 22:15-22.

Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:6, 7.

Matthew 5:43-48; James 4:1, 2; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Romans 12:9-21; Luke 3:14; Matthew 5:9.

VIII. The Church and Church Fellowship

A. The Basis, Nature, and Extent of the Church

373 CHURCH UNIVERSAL

All believers in Christ, and only believers in Christ, are members of the one, holy, Apostolic, Universal Church. They are made and kept members of this Church solely through the gracious work of God. God is at work wherever His Word is preached and His Sacraments are administered. It is in the one Christ, who comes in the Word and the Sacraments, that the Church Universal possesses its unity.

374 CHURCH UNITY

The oneness of the Church is not a goal to be achieved or a task to be completed. It is a unity that belongs to the essence of the Church because the one Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, is its Head. Either a man belongs to this one Church, or he does not. Either the Church is the one Church, or it is not the Church. This union with Christ as the Head also brings about the union of believers with one another. The uniting power of the Gospel becomes manifest both in local congregations and groups of congregations throughout Christendom.

375 MARKS OF THE CHURCH

The means of grace (the Gospel in the Word and the Sacraments) are the only genuine marks of the Church, and by them Christ through the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith in the hearts of men. Through them the Church manifests itself on earth. The Gospel in the Word is not to be thought of as an inarticulate possession of the truth, but as a real proclamation of the Christ for us, the declaration of God's forgiveness for the sake of Christ, our Substitute, "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." Likewise, it is not mere knowledge about the Sacraments which constitutes a mark of the Church, but the actual administration of them according to the institution of Christ. Without the Gospel in preaching and Sacraments it would be impossible to speak of the Church, for then the Church would be non-existent.

Acts 16:30; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26-28; Romans 10:9-17.

Ephesians 4:1-16; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 12:4, 5.

1 Peter 1:23-25; Romans 10:17; 1:16; Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15-20; Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

B. The Basis, Nature, and Extent of Church Fellowship

1. Church Fellowship as a Fellowship of Faith

376 AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

Fidelity to the source and norm of Christian doctrine, that is, submission and obedience to the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, is required on the part of all members of the Church. If a person (or group of persons) by God's grace and the guidance of the Spirit acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as his only authority in all matters of faith and life and conforms thereto, and does not deny, contradict, or ignore any word of God in the Holy Scriptures, he is to be regarded and acknowledged as a brother in the Lord and a fellow worker in the Kingdom of God. Not to recognize him as such constitutes a denial of Christ's work in the brother and leads to schism in the Church.

377 DISRUPTIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH

On the other hand, teaching otherwise than the Word of God teaches, setting up dogma contrary to, or without warrant from, the Word of God, as well as neglecting or omitting any part of the Word of God, creates divisions in the Church and disrupts its unity. To overlook divergences from the Word of God in the teaching and life of other Christians, to tolerate false teaching and practice contrary to Scripture, and to be silent in the face of denials of the Word of God likewise contribute to the disruption of the unity of the Church.

Matthew 28:20; John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; Acts 4:32; 9:27, 28; 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 2:11-14; Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17-20; Matthew 16:6; Ephesians 5:11.

2. Church Fellowship as a Fellowship of Confession

378 FUNCTION OF THE CONFESSIONS

The Church's response and witness to the Word of God, particularly in the face of denial and attack, finds expression in the confessions of the Church. Loyalty to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions is therefore essentially fidelity to the Holy Scriptures. We hold to them not merely because they have been formulated and accepted by the Church as the expression of its faith, but because they constitute the right understanding and exposition of the Scriptures. The Scriptures remain the norm by which every confession must be interpreted and judged.

379 PRIMACY OF THE GOSPEL

This confessional loyalty is of particular importance with reference to the witness of the Confessions to the central theme of the Scrip-

tures, the Gospel. Agreement in the Gospel is fundamental to church fellowship, for the Gospel constitutes the center from which all teachings of the Scriptures are to be viewed. Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of the Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the complete Gospel, and it is for this reason that a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures is an indispensable requisite for church fellowship. It is impossible to recognize as equally valid such confessions as are mutually contradictory. The validity of a confession is established not by the mere claim that it is in harmony with the Scriptures, but by the fact that it is in actual agreement with them and is a faithful restatement of the Gospel as the central theme of the Scriptures.

380 CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

The Lord directs His Church in every age to determine how the testimony to the truth of His Word can be given most effectively, so that all men may hear and know the authority of that Word in such matters. In order to protect the flock of Christ against errorists, it may be necessary to give this testimony in their presence, or it may be necessary to testify by withdrawing from them. There is no warrant in the Scriptures to disregard error and errorists. The Lord makes it the duty of the Church to expose the error to the errorists on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and thus seek to win the erring brethren by love. If the Church's admonition of love remains unheeded, separation as a final endeavor of love becomes inevitable, for even in withdrawal or excommunication for reasons of heresy and apostasy the real purpose is not to exclude the erring brother forever from the fellowship of faith, but to win him back into such fellowship.

Hebrews 10:23; 1 Peter 3:15; Galatians 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10.

1 Corinthians 3:11; Galatians 1:8; 2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Romans 1:16, 17; Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 28:20.

Matthew 7:15; Acts 17:11; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; James 5:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 2:6-10.

3. Church Fellowship as a Fellowship of Love

381 THE BOND OF LOVE

Church fellowship is characterized by love for the brethren. Following the example of the Lord, who gave Himself for the Church, the members of the Church are to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"; "forbearing one another in love, en-

deavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." As Christ loved the Church, so His followers are enjoined to love one another. This love for one another has compelling implications for church fellowship. Christian love yearns for fellowship with the brethren, shuns the loneliness of separation, and is nourished and sustained by the personal relationship of Christ with the Church and the members of the Church with Christ and with one another. It is the nature of Christian faith and love to be expressed in fellowship with brethren.

382 SPEAKING THE WHOLE TRUTH IN LOVE

Christian love for the erring brother is clothed in humility and candor. Humility demands that a Christian remember that he, too, is frail and that his judgment of a brother may be partial and erroneous. Lovelessness, arrogance, and arbitrariness have no place in the treatment of an erring brother. Great and grievous sins of maltreatment of the erring brother may lie concealed behind a screen of avowed faithfulness to the truth. Candor demands that fellowship or the avoidance of fellowship be motivated and fortified by all the relevant teachings of the Word of God. Neither separatism nor unionism may be validated by using selected Scriptural admonitions out of proper context to prove it correct and by disregarding other relevant Scriptural admonitions. It is required of brethren to listen to each other's testimony, to respect each other's conscience, and to judge all relationships in the light of the entire Scriptures.

John 15:9-17; Romans 12:3-21; Ephesians 4:16; Hebrews 10:25.

Galatians 6:1; Acts 18:24-28; Matthew 18:15-18; Acts 9:26-30; Luke 9:49, 50; Romans 14:1; Galatians 6:1-5; 2:11; Acts 20:27; 2 Corinthians 13:8.

4. Church Fellowship as a Fellowship of Work

383 THE LORD'S BEHEST

A fellowship of faith, confession, and love will find expression in a fellowship of work. Such behests of the Lord to the Church as "Go ye," "Pray ye," "Labor ye," are commands not only for individual, but also for joint or corporate activity. The work of proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed is the task both of the individual Christian and of Christians joined together. However, such co-operation among Christians, based on the fellowship of faith, confession, and love, should not be confused or identified with co-operation in external matters. If such co-operation in external matters is not contrary to the Holy Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions, it becomes a matter of Christian freedom and may be undertaken for reasons of good stewardship and efficiency.

384 ONE LORD — ONE TASK

The Lord has given many gifts to the Church, not for the edification of a few, but for the edification of all. The Lord has assigned tasks to the Church for which He enlists the co-operation of all its members with Himself and with one another. It would be a misreading or a misunderstanding of the Gospel to insist that each Christian or each group of Christians must work entirely alone or that each Christian serve the Lord in his own self-chosen way. Such an attitude results in confusion, suspicion, and poor stewardship. One of the purposes of the Gospel is to bring Christians to serve the Lord together in the Lord's way.

385 ONE WORD — ONE MIND

This fellowship of work can become a reality only when a fellowship of faith, confession, and love exists. It is only when Christians confess the same faith and are agreed to let the Word of God be authoritative and normative in all matters of faith and life that a real fellowship of work can result. God's Word requires that Christians "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

John 13:13-17; 17:18; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 28:19; Luke 10:2; Romans 15:26, 27.

1 Corinthians 12-14; 16:1.

John 15:1-5; Ephesians 4:13-16; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Philippians 1:27.

IX. The Church and Anti-Christian Organizations

386 CHURCH UNDER CROSS

The Lord has warned His disciples that as long as this world stands, the Church will be under the cross. Christ's name will be mocked by unbelievers and His authority usurped by impostors within and without Christendom. As for the faithful members of the Church, the warning of their Lord always applies: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you," John 15:20. The Church as the company of God's faithful witnesses will continue under bitter attack and at times must endure grievous tribulation.

387 CHURCH IN COMBAT

In the face of these onslaughts of the enemies of Christ, the Church must stand firm in the faith. It does more than bear and suffer. It unmask, condemns, and combats with the sword of the Spirit all religions and sects which alter or displace the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ by their own devices or efforts; all organizations and movements which seek to deprive God of His sovereignty; and all humanistic and secularistic philosophies which exalt the powers of man and refuse to give to God the glory that is due Him.

The Church must be alert to detect such anti-Christian propaganda everywhere, even where it appears in moralistic and pseudo-Christian form, as in those lodges and fraternal orders which explicitly or by omission remove Christ from His position of mediatorship between God and man and thus deny the central teaching of Scriptures, that salvation is solely and wholly through Christ. Over against the teaching of such organizations the testimony of the Church must be clear and unequivocal. By proclamation and by salutary discipline all men must be shown and must be made to face the fact that they cannot serve two masters. To compromise with work-righteousness is to endanger the whole Church; and each and all must share the labor of safeguarding the faithful, of extricating those who have become involved in organizations which proclaim salvation by works, and of denying fellowship to those who stubbornly refuse to yield to the Word of God by continuing in their anti-Christian affiliations. Synods as well as Christian congregations cannot remain indifferent or inactive in the exercise of salutary discipline necessitated by such divided loyalty. This task, like all the tasks of the Church, must be done in holy fear and in holy love.

Mark 12:1-12; Matthew 16:24-28; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Ephesians 6:10-19; Romans 1:18-2:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

Galatians 1:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Matthew 18:15-18; 6:24; 7:21-27.

X. The Church and the World to Come

389 CHURCH IN ETERNITY

The Church in all its activities in the world remembers that its life in Christ is eternal. The fact that the Church exists, that men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is due ultimately to the eternal election of God, who "hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him," Ephesians 1:4. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14. God by His Word and Sacrament calls men to faith and keeps them in that faith unto the end. Remaining humbly and gratefully conscious of its origin in God's elective will, the Church is preserved from the fatal delusion that it is a self-caused and self-sustaining institution; and the individual member lives and works in the blessed assurance that nothing shall separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

390 CHURCH IN TIME

The Church remembers also that it is the beginning of the new world in the midst of the old, that the goal of all its working and striving is not in this present world, that it is the body of the Christ whose Kingdom is not of this world, the Christ who is to come. Since we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the Church's life is marked by an alert and responsible expectancy and striving, and measures all its actions by the inescapable and just judgment of Christ upon those actions. Such a life cannot fail to be a life of daily repentance.

391 CHURCH IN TRIUMPH

The Church's expectancy of its Lord's return is also a joyous hope: the Bridegroom who will return has even now made the Church's life the evening before the feast. This solemnly joyous expectancy frees the Church from a sole and desperate concern with things earthly and temporal; it makes the Church free to act spontaneously according to the promptings of the love that is the pulse beat of its faith. Despite all the seeming triumphs of Satan, the Church possesses for its work in the world a serene courage and an undisturbed vision and assurance of victory. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:28-39; John 10:27, 28; Luke 12:32.

Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 3:1, 2; Luke 12:42-48.

Luke 21:28; Matthew 25:1-13; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Romans 8:31-39; Revelation 22.

UNITED TESTIMONY ON FAITH AND LIFE

(Approved by the churches of the American Lutheran Conference 1952)

CONCERNING FAITH

Preamble

- 392 The Lutheran church bodies making up the American Lutheran Conference have now walked and worked together for a period of more than twenty years. They have learned to know one another both as to doctrine and as to manner of life. They have been associated as brethren serving the Lord. Coming out of varying backgrounds as to national origin and as to distinctive trends in church life and practice, they have learned to cherish one another's contributions to the fullness of the Church's life in Christ. Through closer acquaintance and deepening fellowship they have found that the common roots of their faith, in the Holy Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions, have given them a common life in communion with the one Lord and Savior.
- 393 Their loyalty to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, their Lutheran heritage, and the desperate need of the world seem to call for further exploration of the possibilities of closer fellowship, greater understanding, and closer organizational co-operation or union. They hold the basic prerequisite of all such attempts to be an adequate unity and witness with regard to the essential realities of the Christian faith. Their life and experience together these past two decades lead them to believe that such an essential unity exists among them.
- 394 As an expression of their common Christian faith and a witness to their understanding of the historic Lutheran confessions and to the theological agreement which has been found to exist among them, they join in this united testimony to our time and situation:

I. God

- 395 We believe in the one and only God who has revealed Himself to us as the God of our salvation. In His work of creation, redemption, and sanctification He has designated and manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We therefore confess our faith in the Triune God, three distinct Persons in the one Godhead.
- 396 We believe in God the Father, the Creator and Preserver of the world, who in His divine majesty is infinitely exalted above His creatures, and who in fatherly compassion seeks the eternal welfare of man, whom He made in His own image but who has fallen into sin and lives in the bondage of sin.
- 397 We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, begotten of the Father from eternity, "who for us men and for our salvation came

down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary."

398 We believe in God the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and Giver of life," through whose work alone men can be brought into fellowship with God and be made heirs of everlasting life.

399 We believe that the personal distinctions in the Godhead cannot be denied or obscured without impairing the truth and power of the Christian Gospel. We worship the Triune God.

II. Atonement

400 We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, in fulfillment of the eternal counsel of God, came into the world to be the Redeemer of mankind. By becoming one with man in the Incarnation, Christ entered into decisive conflict on man's behalf with sin and Satan, which defeat men and bring them under the righteous judgment of God. By His holy life He perfectly fulfilled the Divine Law for us. By His innocent sufferings and death in our stead He made propitiation for our sins and delivered us from the wrath of God and from the power of the devil. By His resurrection He released us from the dominion of sin and death and demonstrated and proclaimed the fullness of the victory which He has won in our behalf.

401 Christ "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification"; God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" and "with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53). "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2 Cor. 5:19). God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, AV). "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

402 Christ entered into death in order to bring men, held in the bondage of sin, death, and Satan, unto life with Himself. In His victory over death and the devil He frees us to "be His own, live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

III. The Means of Grace

403 God has willed that the knowledge and benefit of Christ's redemption be brought to man through His Means of Grace, namely, through the Gospel in the Word and in the Sacraments. Through these Means of Grace He not only offers, but actually bestows, His grace in Christ unto forgiveness of sins and a life of everlasting fellowship with Him.

THE WORD

- 404 We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of man's salvation. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit informs and convinces us that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and testifies in our hearts that our faith in Christ is not in vain. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17, AV).
- 405 We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, AV).
- 406 The Bible is the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through human personalities in the course of human history. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21, AV). We acknowledge with humble gratitude the condescending love of God in speaking to men through the agency of human language. We reject all rationalizing processes which would explain away either the divine or the human factor in the Bible.
- 407 The Holy Scriptures contain both Law and Gospel, but the primary content of the Holy Scriptures is the Gospel. The Law is brought into the service of the Gospel by working in man a realization of his sinfulness and of his need of redemption, by awakening in him the terrors of conscience since he stands under the wrath of God, and by revealing to him God's holy will. The Gospel brings to the penitent sinner the assurance of God's pardon and the promise of victory over sin.
- 408 We hold it basic to the right use of the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God to man that it must be its own interpreter. All interpretation of Scripture must be in the light of Scripture itself with its central theme: God's loving purpose to save men in Christ.

THE SACRAMENTS

- 409 In and with His Word Christ has instituted for His Church two Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which bear His seal and promise.

410 *Baptism.* In the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," we are born again of water and the Spirit, receiving the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sin, and are made members of Christ's Body and citizens of His Kingdom. In receiving Baptism we are made partakers of Christ's death and resurrection.

411 We believe that it is Christ's will and command that infants be baptized and that they be nurtured and instructed in the Christian faith. Such Baptism is the establishment of the covenant of grace, which has everlasting validity unless it is rejected in unbelief, and it is a clear proclamation of the Gospel of grace for all men.

412 When Baptism is administered later in life, as a Sacrament and Means of Grace it admits the baptized person into fellowship with Christ and His Church and through faith assures the believer of his full status as a child of God.

413 The benefits of Baptism are not dependent upon the mode in which the water is administered but only upon the Word and Promise of Christ.

414 *The Lord's Supper.* In the Lord's Supper Christ gives us His body offered up for us and His blood shed for us, to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our faith, and the increase in holiness of life. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16, AV).

415 By virtue of Christ's promise we hold that all communicants receive the body and blood of Him who is present not only in the congregation observing the Sacrament but in the Sacrament itself. Faith in Christ as the Savior from sin, and faith in His promise in the words of institution, together with repentance, are necessary for a worthy participation in this Sacrament. The Church therefore has the duty to withhold this Sacrament from openly ungodly and unbelieving sinners, since Christ's promise of forgiveness is rejected by them. Faith does not make or unmake the Sacrament, but is required for the salutary use of the Sacrament.

416 We believe that we receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, and the basis of this faith is our Lord's promise and assurance, not an ability conferred on a priest to change bread and wine into the Lord's body and blood by reciting the words of institution, nor the intention of a congregation to partake of the body and blood of the Savior. The Lord is personally present during the celebration of the Holy Communion to give sacramentally what He promises in His Word.

IV. Justification

- 417 We believe that Christ is "the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world," hence forgiveness of sins has been provided by God for all men.
- 418 We believe that man, who by nature is "dead in trespasses and sins," is utterly unable to save himself, or to contribute anything of merit or virtue toward his own salvation, and can be saved only by God's grace and power. (See *Minneapolis Theses* on Conversion and Election.)
- 419 We believe that God, out of pure grace, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, "who was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justification," passes upon the guilt-burdened sinner the judgment of acquittal, regards him in Christ as if he had never sinned, and makes him a child of God and a joint-heir with Christ.
- 420 We believe that this forgiveness is received only by those who through the grace offered and bestowed through the Gospel accept it in repentance and faith. This faith in the Gospel, the reliance upon the work of Christ for forgiveness and salvation, is wrought in sinful man by the Holy Spirit.
- 421 We believe that this scriptural doctrine of justification by grace alone and through faith alone is in a very significant sense "the doctrine whereby the Church stands or falls." We therefore purpose to guard it carefully and proclaim it earnestly. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

V. Sanctification

- 422 We believe and bear witness that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his heart the justified sinner has been given power to overcome sin and to walk in newness of life. Day by day the believer's life is transformed from within by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, through the Means of Grace. By this renewal every earthly relationship is sanctified through fellowship with God, every honorable vocation is holy when dedicated to the service of God, and all of life is a stewardship for which the believer is accountable to God.
- 423 This new life of faith and love is not the product of man's own efforts but is the grateful response of the regenerate soul to the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Spirit.
- 424 Because the old sinful nature continues to inhere also in the believer as long as he remains in this world, there is constant need for repentance and faith as the condition of growth toward that fullness of life in God which shall be his in the world to come.

425 We believe that the Lord of the Church summons every believer to a more earnest striving for holiness and to a more complete dedication of all that he is and has, and we call upon all the people of our Churches to present themselves anew as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

VI. The Church

THE CHURCH'S LIFE AND WORK

426 We believe that there is One Holy, Universal, and Apostolic Church, consisting of all those in every age who have been united with Jesus Christ through faith in Him, have been baptized into His name, and live in fellowship with Him. "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men should be everywhere alike" (Augsburg Confession, Art. VII). Consistent with this historic Lutheran position we acknowledge with joy the presence of redeemed children of God in all the Churches where the revealed Word of God and the Sacraments are used with such fidelity to their God-given purposes that sinners can be saved thereby. We rejoice in our spiritual fellowship with all fellow believers in the One Church, the Communion of Saints.

427 We believe that the Church has its unity in Christ through the Holy Spirit. No church organization should assume that it is the only manifestation of the Communion of Saints. All separatism which ignores the existence of other Christian Churches, as well as all attempts to reduce the unity of the Church to outer organizational forms, lead to a denial of the true nature of the Church and to confusion and frustration in the attainment of its objectives. We seek to promote the organizational growth and unity of the Church wherever this may serve the purposes of the Gospel.

428 We believe that the Christian congregation has all the spiritual gifts necessary for the nourishment of the life in Christ and the extension of God's Kingdom on the earth through the Means of Grace.

429 We believe that all members of the Church are royal priests, enjoying full and free access to the throne of grace with no mediator save Jesus Christ. In calling a pastor to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments in their midst and on their behalf, the members of a congregation exercise their royal priesthood and in no sense surrender it. The privilege and responsibility of ministering to the saints of God, of proclaiming His glory to all men, and of living victoriously in all the relationships of life, remain the privilege and responsibility of all members of the Church.

430 We believe that in this world of sin and strife, where the forces of evil are threatening to destroy both the Church and society, the Lord of the Church is summoning His people to dedicate themselves, their possessions, and all their powers anew to the accomplishment of His saving purposes for mankind. Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church seeks and works for the complete well-being of all men.

431 All men must be made to recognize the authority of God's Law to which they are responsible and by which they are judged. Those in authority in all areas of life must govern according to God's Law which is ordained for the ordering of human society and the welfare of all. So governing, they are instruments of God and servants of the common good. Failing to do so they bring God's judgment upon themselves and destruction and disaster to the society which they govern.

432 We recognize that if the Church is to be a witnessing and an evangelizing force in the world, there must be a constant quickening of the spiritual life in our congregations, whereby those who are dead may be brought to newness of life, those who are slumbering may be awakened, those who are vacillating may become steadfast in faith.

433 As the Good Shepherd, Christ guides and guards the Church through perils and assaults in a hostile world, and the Holy Spirit as the Chief Builder of the Church cleanses and sanctifies the Church as the habitation of God. Through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, and thus directs and equips it to do the will of God. Where the Means of Grace are in use, there God builds His Church.

THE CHURCH'S HOPE AND TRIUMPH

434 The Church in all its activities remembers that its life is from everlasting to everlasting. The fact that the Church exists, that men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is due ultimately to God's eternal purpose "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." God calls men to faith through Word and Sacrament and keeps them in that faith unto the end. Remaining humbly and gratefully conscious of its origin, the Church is preserved from the fatal delusion that it is self-caused and self-sustaining. And since it knows that Christ will come again as Judge, the Church's life is marked by an alert and responsible expectancy, measuring all its actions by the inescapable and just judgment of Christ upon them.

435 The Church's expectancy of the Lord's return is also a joyous hope. "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). This joyful hope frees the Church from an inordinate anxiety in things temporal. Even while earnestly

devoting itself to God's purposes in this world, it looks for the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," and for the full deliverance of creation "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Filled with serene courage, the Church therefore waits and works, knowing that Jesus Christ both is and shall be Lord and King forever.

CONCERNING LIFE AND PRACTICE

436 Though heirs of a common Reformation heritage, the Churches constituting the American Lutheran Conference have sprung from different nationalistic backgrounds and have been led through diverse experiences in arriving at the juncture where they seriously consider organic merger. According to the freedom inherent in the Gospel each has developed its distinctive church life and established its own practices. As they contemplate losing their individual identity in organic union, it seems good to set forth clearly certain matters pertaining to Christian life, forms of worship, and churchly practice concerning which misunderstandings might possibly arise.

I. Liturgical Trends

437 While the ceremonial law of the Old Testament prescribed in rather minute detail the order of service, vestments, and other appointments, the New Testament Church has no divinely prescribed liturgy.

438 In accord with sound New Testament teaching, the Lutheran Church has confessed that for the true unity of the Church it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, and that it is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by man, should be everywhere alike.

439 This evangelical freedom, however, has traditionally been conditioned by such cautionary teachings of the New Testament as St. Paul's statements: "But let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40); "All things are lawful, but not all things edify" (1 Cor. 10:23); and "... build each other up, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:11).

440 Inasmuch as every public order of worship should implement a sinner's encounter with the living God, it follows that every part of the service should relate the sound theology of Law and Gospel to the worshiper.

441 In historical Lutheranism this has tended toward a continued liturgical emphasis, in which certain fixed forms have followed a rather uniform pattern as a guide for man's true worship of God. Quite naturally, a Church with a oneness of confessional witness will manifest this oneness, even in external forms. A rampant heterogeneity

in forms can readily militate against a common confessional witness. We commend, therefore, the current concern manifested in the American Lutheran family for uniformity in liturgical practices. On the other hand, we express warning against the peril of equating form with faith. Within the true faith, ample variety of outward expression must be allowed, and the right of each congregation to determine its form of worship must be recognized. The faith itself, with its pulsating life seeking an ever richer form of expression, may be stultified and lost by an inordinate passion for form.

II. Lay Activities in the Church

- 442 In mutual approach and understanding the church bodies concerned declare adherence to the following principles in relation to Lay Activities in the Church:
- 443 (1) The ministry of reconciliation, which is the gift of God, is the glory of the Christian Church. "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).
- 444 (2) Christ the Redeemer, ascended into heaven, gave to His Church diversity of gifts for its edification. "And He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4: 11, 12). "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:4-7).
- 445 (3) The immediate recipient and the responsible custodian of these gifts is the local Church, the individual congregation. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21b-23).
- 446 (4) The Church is a fellowship of believers and therefore a spiritual priesthood. "Ye, also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

447 (5) The local congregation is under obligation to seek out and to utilize the abilities and the gifts resident within it, and is responsible that their use shall build up the Church. The same obligations and responsibilities obtain with reference to the church body and its minor subdivisions and auxiliaries. "But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:18-21). "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the Word of truth. But shun profane babblings, for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:15-18).

448 (6) The Means of Grace have been given to the congregation, and, for the purpose of administering Word and Sacrament, God has instituted the public office of the ministry, which, by the official call of the congregation, is committed to one or more qualified persons. "And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Tim. 5:22 a, RSV).

449 (7) The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers gives the individual member no right to assume any of the functions which belong to the public ministries of the congregation. "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:15 a.) "... no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, unless he be regularly called" (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV).

450 (8) The establishment of the public office of the ministry by a local fellowship of believers does not absolve the individual believer from his responsibility as a spiritual priest, or in any way excuse a congregation from utilizing the spiritual gifts which it possesses. "Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:11).

451 (9) Since God in His Word reminds His children, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13); "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14); "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8);

"Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32); the Church will not restrain but will rather encourage all its members to private study of the Word of God; to bear Christian witness in word and in deed; to seek opportunities for mutual edification; to share in the teaching ministry, locally and in the Church at large, when requested through regular channels; and to accept the responsibility of public proclamation of the Word when appointed to do so by the properly constituted authority of the congregation or of the church body. "And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting" (Rom. 12:6-8a). "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly" (1 Peter 5:1, 2a).

III. Elements in the Lord's Supper

- 452 Christ's use of wine and unleavened bread in the Passover meal has fixed for the Christian Church through the centuries the use of these elements in the Holy Communion. Exegetical attempts to invalidate this have not been successful, and exceptions within our Lutheran circles have not changed the practice of the Lutheran Church in general in its use of wine and unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper.

IV. Christian Liberty

- 453 "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). In the conviction that this liberty is a basic part of our Christian heritage, re-emphasized in the Lutheran Reformation, we exhort all Christians to know this freedom in fullness of experience. "For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).
- 454 Standing fast in this liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, the Christian subjects himself in love to Christ and to his brethren. As a child of God, being led by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14), he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, resisting the desires of the flesh, aspiring to the fruits of the Spirit, seeking to give no occasion for stumbling to weaker brethren.
- 455 "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this:

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal. 5:13-26).

456 "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1, 2).

457 "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). (1 Peter 1:2-11.) "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to the weak. For if a man see thee who hast knowledge sitting at meat in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. 8:9-13).

458 "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, 32). "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11).

459 In mutual approach and understanding, the church bodies concerned expect that all member congregations shall give free course to the Word of God as it teaches us how to live as the children of God.

- 460 The church bodies concerned know and confess "that the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12), and that Jesus has laid the Law with all its implications on the hearts and minds of all His disciples.
- 461 They also know that there are issues not specifically covered by clear statements of the written Word of God (e. g., establishing borderlines in relation to amusements, dress, food, and beverages), and they expect the ministry of teaching in each constituent part to guide toward clarity of thought and sensitiveness of conscience to the end that "every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5, AV) and that each and all live up to their expressed convictions.
- 462 In this connection they also expect an understanding of the fact that compulsions lying upon the individual in response to God's grace toward him are not to be made laws for the control of the lives of others. "Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand" (Rom. 14:3, 4). (Gal. 2:5.) "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect (full-grown), be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you: only whereunto ye have attained, by that same rule let us also walk" (Phil. 3:15).

V. Concerning Evangelism

- 463 By the term Evangelism we designate the work of applying the Evangel (Gospel) to the souls of men: to win the unsaved for Christ, to keep the believer in Christ, and to recall the backslider to Christ. It is the essential and continuous task of the whole Church.
- 464 The congregation must never cease its efforts to deepen the spiritual life of its members and to call to repentance and faith the straying.
- 465 Those within the fold must ever seek to bring the "other sheep" to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls.
- 466 It is recognized that some Christians, both laymen and pastors, have received greater gifts than others to declare the Word to the unconverted or unchurched. (Eph. 4:11: "God gave some . . . evangelists.") The local congregation may agree to engage such an evangelist to supplement the ministry of its pastor for a stipulated period of time.
- 467 It is likewise recognized that, in addition to the regular church services, there is value in special public gatherings for the purpose of calling to repentance and faith the unsaved and the carnally secure. Caution must be exercised, however, not to substitute mass hysteria

for the sound working of the Holy Spirit through the regular preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The congregation will make certain that its whole program shall be permeated with the spirit of Scriptural Evangelism.

VI. Spiritual Fellowship

- 468 (1) The Christian faith *is* fellowship — fellowship with Christ, the Head, and fellowship with all believers, who are the members of His Body, the Church. It is called into being by action of the Holy Spirit as He begets children of God. "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5a). "... that they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee" (John 17:21). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19, AV).
- 469 Article VII: Of the Church, the Augsburg Confession, clearly sets forth: "Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered.
- 470 "And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: 'One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.'"
- 471 (2) Christian faith *seeks* fellowship, that is, the discovery and the practice of this spiritual fellowship with other Christians. It laments isolation; it yearns for communion. Christian faith seeks fellowship in prayer, in corporate worship, in the Communion, in doing the Lord's work, and even in suffering for the faith. The Holy Scriptures speak approvingly of agreeing in petition (Matt. 18:19), of being assembled together for worship (Heb. 10:25), of provoking one another unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24), and of experiencing the fellowship of suffering (Phil. 3:10 and Rev. 1:9).
- 472 (3) The Scriptures also make it clear, however, that for the true unity of the Church, and therefore for the full realization of spiritual fellowship of believers one with another, it is essential that there be agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.
- 473 The Holy Scriptures bid us to continue in Christ's words (John 8:31), to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matt. 16:6), to be on guard against false prophets (Matt. 7:15), to discern those who make a pretense of piety (Matt. 7:21), to mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine (Rom. 16:17), to avoid being unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), to regard as accursed

the preacher of "another gospel" (Gal. 1:8). It is our solemn duty to try the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1), to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), to do nothing against the truth, but be faithful witnesses for the truth (2 Cor. 13:8). These oft-repeated warnings and admonitions can be ignored by the Church only at great peril to its own spiritual life.

474 (4) It is admitted that a problem of serious proportions arises from the fact that there are erring brethren. They are brethren, because with us they share justifying faith. They are erring in so far as they depart from the truth as revealed in the Scriptures or from the life demanded by the regenerating Gospel. We feel the urge to confess our common faith, but we realize the danger of condoning error, and thereby confusing the Church. There is no easy solution to this problem. As we acknowledge the measure of unity that exists, we must at the same time bear witness against error as we see it, humbly re-examining our understanding of the truth in the light of the revealed Word, and diligently seeking for the mind of Christ in our attitudes towards these erring brethren. Lovingly, Aquila and Priscilla remedied the deficiency of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Undauntedly, Paul withstood the erring Peter (Gal. 2:11).

475 So long as witness can be borne to the truth as we see it in Christ, a measure of outward fellowship may be enjoyed even with such as differ with us in the apprehension of certain aspects of the truth.

476 (5) There is room for a large measure of co-operation in externals which need not involve the principles of spiritual fellowship.

477 So long as there is no compromise of divine truth, such co-operation in external matters may be practiced with secular groups or with other Churches.

478 (6) Article III, Church Fellowship, *Minneapolis Theses*, has been formulated as a result of century-long experience of the Lutheran Church, has been accepted by our church bodies in 1930, and furnishes the correct guiding principles on fellowship for our Churches. It is recognized that, in the application of these principles, situations calling for exceptions will arise. The individual Christian, the conscientious pastor, the local congregation, and the church bodies, in determining their attitudes in such situations, must earnestly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the instruction of the inspired Word.

THE MINNEAPOLIS THESES

(Formulated 1925. Adopted by the American Lutheran Conference 1930)

I. The Scriptures

- 479 The synods signatory to these Articles of Agreement accept without exception all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

II. The Lutheran Symbols

- 480 1. These synods also, without reservation, accept the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church, as this has found expression in response to the exigencies arising from time to time.

- 481 (The Evangelical Lutheran Church, in agreement with the position of the Lutheran Church of Norway and Denmark, has officially accepted only the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Small Catechism. This position does not imply that The Evangelical Lutheran Church in any way whatsoever rejects the remaining symbolical books of the Lutheran Church, as the constant reference to them in her theological literature amply testifies, but since the other symbolical books are not known to her constituency generally, it has not been deemed necessary to require formal subscription to the entire Book of Concord.)

- 482 2. Adherence to our confessions pertains only to their doctrinal content (i. e., the doctrines declared to be the divine truth and the rejection of opposite doctrines), but to these without exception or limitation in all articles and parts, no matter whether a doctrine is specifically cited as a confession or incidentally introduced for the purpose of elucidating or proving some other doctrine. All that pertains to the form of presentation (historical comments, questions purely exegetical, etc.) is not binding.

III. Church Fellowship

- 483 1. These synods agree that true Christians are found in every denomination which has so much of divine truth revealed in Holy Scripture that children of God can be born in it; that according to the Word of God and our Confessions, church fellowship, that is, mutual recognition, altar and pulpit fellowship, and eventually co-operation in the strictly essential work of the Church, presupposes unanimity

in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same in word and deed.

484 Where the establishment and maintenance of church fellowship ignores present doctrinal differences or declares them a matter of indifference, there is unionism, pretense of union which does not exist.

485 2. They agree that the rule, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only," is not only in full accord with, but necessarily implied in, the teachings of the divine Word and the Confessions of the evangelical Lutheran Church. This rule, implying the rejection of all unionism and syncretism, must be observed as setting forth a principle elementary to sound and conservative Lutheranism.

IV. Points of Doctrine

486 In 1920 all synods with the exception of the Buffalo Synod (to which they had not been submitted) adopted theses on:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Work of Christ | 5. Justification |
| 2. The Gospel | 6. Faith |
| 3. Absolution | 7. Conversion |
| 4. Holy Baptism | 8. Election |

487 After discussion of these theses the representatives present came to the conclusion that we are in full agreement in all essentials pertaining to these doctrines. (*The reference is to the Chicago Theses, which follow.*)

1. *In regard to the work of Christ, Redemption and Reconciliation:*

488 Jesus Christ, God and Man, has not only for the benefit of, but in place of, the human race taken upon Himself the sins of the world with the just penalties for them. In the place of the world and for its benefit, He has by His holy life fulfilled the Law, and by His suffering and death, by His blood, paid the penalty for the whole world, truly and completely satisfied the divine justice; redeemed the world from guilt and punishment of sin, and brought about the reconciliation of God, whose wrath had come upon mankind on account of sin and whose justice required satisfaction.

2. *In regard to the Gospel:*

489 The Gospel is not only a story, a narrative of what Jesus Christ has done, but at the same time it offers and gives the result of the work of Christ—above all, forgiveness of sin. Yea, it even at the same time gives the power to accept what it offers.

3. *In regard to Absolution:*

490 Absolution does not essentially differ from the forgiveness of sin offered by the Gospel. The only difference is that absolution is the

direct application of forgiveness of sin to the individual desiring the consolation of the Gospel. Absolution is not a judgment passed by the pastor on those being absolved, declaring that they now have forgiveness.

4. *In regard to Holy Baptism and the Gospel:*

- 491 The Holy Ghost works regeneration of the sinner both through Baptism and the Gospel. Both are therefore justly called the means of regeneration.

5. *In regard to Justification:*

- 492 Justification is not an act in man but an act by God in heaven, declaring the repentant and believing just, or stating that he is regarded as such on account of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ by faith.

6. *In regard to Faith:*

- 493 Faith is not in any measure a human effort. Faith is an act of man in so far as it is man who believes. But both the power to believe and the act of believing are God's work and gift in the human soul or heart.

7. *In regard to Conversion:*

- 494 Conversion as the word is commonly used in our Lutheran confession comprises contrition and faith produced by the Law and the Gospel. If man is not converted, the responsibility and guilt fall on him because he in spite of God's all-sufficient grace through the call "would not," according to the Word of Christ, Matt. 23:37: "How often would I have gathered thy children even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

- 495 If a man is converted the glory belongs to God alone, whose work it is throughout. Before conversion or in conversion, there is no co-operation of man, but at the very moment man is converted, co-operation begins through the new powers given in conversion; though this co-operation is never independent of the Holy Spirit, but always "to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him" (Formula of Concord).

8. *In regard to Election:*

- 496 The causes of election to salvation are the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ; nothing in us on account of which God has elected us to eternal life.

- 497 On the one hand, we reject all forms of synergism which in any way would deprive God of His glory as the only Savior. On the other hand, we reject all forms of Calvinism which directly or indirectly would conflict with the order of salvation, and would not give to all

a full and equally great opportunity of salvation, or which in any manner would violate the Word of God which says that God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

V. The Lodge Question

498 1. These synods agree that all such organizations or societies, secret or open, as are either avowedly religious or practice the forms of religion without confessing as a matter of principle the Triune God or Jesus Christ as the Son of God, come into the flesh, and our Savior from sin, or teach, instead of the Gospel, salvation by human works or morality, are anti-Christian and destructive of the best interests of the Church and the individual soul, and that, therefore, the Church of Christ and its congregations can have no fellowship with them.

499 2. They agree that a Lutheran synod should not tolerate pastors who have affiliated themselves with any anti-Christian society. And they admonish their pastors and congregations to testify against the sin of lodgery and to put forth earnest efforts publicly and privately to enlighten and persuade persons who are members of anti-Christian societies to sever their connection with such organizations.

VI. Recognition

500 The representatives of the synods here present agree that the synods accepting these articles are one in doctrine and practice, recognize each other as truly Lutheran, and may enter into pulpit and altar fellowship.

LUTHERAN CHURCH BODIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

(Statistics for 1955, National Lutheran Council)

Church Bodies		Organized	Total Ordained Ministers	Serving Pastorates	Organized Congregations	Regular Preaching Places	Baptized Membership	Confirmed Membership	SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
									Number	Teachers	Pupils
1	United Lutheran (NLC)	1918	4,391	3,205	4,383	—	2,270,702	1,555,708	4,485	93,491	783,040
2	Lutheran Church —										
	Missouri Synod (S)	1847	5,210	4,027	5,123	148	2,076,379	1,344,715	4,891	69,878	630,176
3	Evangelical (NLC)	1917	1,976	1,385	2,614	68	1,004,239	670,432	2,478	39,853	299,107
4	American (NLC)	1930	2,012	1,591	2,060	12	899,078	602,897	2,055	30,682	310,697
5	Augustana (NLC)	1860	1,179	889	1,223	—	536,886	367,427	1,169	21,735	199,123
6	Joint Synod of Wisconsin (S)	1849	802	672	833	25	335,085	225,002	839	—	49,336
7	Lutheran Free (NLC)	1897	245	164	355	4	72,279	48,597	317	3,702	26,389
8	United Evangelical (NLC)	1870	204	138	185	7	59,832	37,771	182	2,858	28,673
9	Suomi Synod (NLC)	1890	95	82	159	28	34,814	24,224	123	1,473	10,257
10	American Evangelical (NLC)	1894	82	55	86	2	22,340	15,631	76	865	5,098
11	Slovak Church (S)	1902	*62	*57	*62	*8	*20,988	*15,670	*347	*396	*3,273
12	Norwegian Synod (S)	1918	*74	*54	*74	*5	*12,371	*8,060	*74	*415	*2,910
13	National Evangelical (S)	1898	33	30	66	8	8,624	5,685	55	417	2,861
14	Finnish Apostolic	1879	**22	**18	**59	**	**8,001	**6,589	**32	**234	**1,526
15	Negro Missions (S)	1877	25	24	50	—	6,460	3,084	50	—	2,997
16	Lutheran Brethren	1900	76	43	54	59	3,285	—	58	*271	*4,055
17	Eielsen Synod	1846	5	4	12	12	1,575	1,200	6	20	200
GRAND TOTAL			16,493	12,438	17,398	386	7,372,938	4,932,692	17,237	266,290	2,359,718
Total — United States only			15,915	11,963	16,360	298	7,150,704	4,789,300	16,301	260,056	2,308,245
Total — Canada only			578	475	1,038	88	222,234	143,392	936	6,234	51,473

(NLC) denotes members of the National Lutheran Council, (S) of the Synodical Conference.

*Figures from 1954.

**Finnish Apostolic triennial figures 1953.

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